

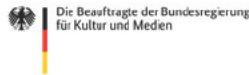
# SOUND OF FALLING

by

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*I'd rather people feel a film before understanding it.*

QUOTE BY ROBERT BRESSON

The entire story takes place in the same location, a four-sided farmstead in the Altmark region, across several decades.

A few bits of dialogue are not written in dialogue form, but are integrated into the text. They will be developed later in dialect, along with the actors who speak Low German dialect, during the rehearsal process.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### Time period: 1910s

**Alma (7):** Sister of Lia, Fritz, Hedda, Hein, Gerti, little Peter and others who remain unnamed, as well as the deceased Alma, who can be seen in the photograph.

**Lia (15):** Sister of Alma, Fritz, Hedda, Hein, Gerti, little Peter and others who remain unnamed, as well as the deceased Alma, who can be seen in the photograph.

**Little Cripple Hedda (11):** Sister of Alma, Lia, Fritz, Hein, Gerti, little Peter and others who remain unnamed, as well as the deceased Alma, who can be seen in the photograph.

**Gerti (12):** Sister of Alma, Lia, Fritz, Hedda, Hein little Peter and others who remain unnamed, as well as the deceased Alma, who can be seen in the photograph.

**Fritz (17):** Brother of Alma, Lia, Hedda, Hein, Gerti, little Peter and others who remain unnamed, as well as the deceased Alma, who can be seen in the photograph.

**Emma (36):** Mother of Alma, Lia, Fritz, Hedda, Hein, Gerti, little Peter and others who remain unnamed, as well as the deceased Alma, who can be seen in the photograph.

**Father Max (45):** Father of Alma, Lia, Fritz, Hedda, Hein, Gerti, little Peter and others who remain unnamed, as well as the deceased Alma, who can be seen in the photograph.

**Elderly Frieda (89):** Alma and her siblings' great grandmother, and Max' grandmother.

**Ugly Trudi (17):** Farm maid

**Big Berta (32):** Farm maid

### **Supporting cast / Day roles:**

**Officer (53)**

**Military doctor (37)**

**Doctor (63)**

**Boy:** Checks the threshing floor with the other children to see whether the fly is still in the deceased Erwin's mouth. Alma's brother.

**Man (48):** Takes Lia in as a maid on his farm.

**Extras:**

Field workers, Erwin (dead boy), cluster of people, farmhand (50), farmhand (21), more farmhands and maids, harvest workers, family members (mentioned by name but appearing as extras), children

**Time period: 1940s**

**Irm (16):** Erika's sister

**Erika (17):** Irm's sister

**Uncle Fritz (49)**

**Erika's brother (20)**

**Extras:**

Villagers, family members, young women and their children

**Time period: 1980s**

**Angelika (16):** Irm and Albat's daughter, Rainer's cousin, Uwe's niece.

**Irm (56):** Angelika's mother, Albat's wife, Uwe's sister, Rainer's aunt.

**Albat (54):** Angelika's father, Irm's husband, Uwe's brother in law.

**Rainer (16):** Uwe's son, Irm's nephew, Angelika's cousin.

**Uncle Uwe (48):** Rainer's father, Irm's brother, Angelika's uncle, Albat's brother in law.

**Supporting cast / Day roles:**

**Farmer:** Insists that Irm has to catch the eel.

**Boy (19):** Angelika bites his hand in the hay. Friend of the family, who takes the polaroid photo of everyone at the barbecue.

**Extras:**

2 male cousins (10, 8) and 1 female cousin (5)  
of Angelika and Rainer, crowd in the yard,  
villagers, teenagers, family members, friends  
of the family

**Time period: 2020s**

**Lenka (12):** Christa and Hannes' daughter,  
Nelly's sister

**Nelly (5):** Christa and Hannes' daughter,  
Lenka's sister

**Christa (42):** Lenka and Nelly's mother, Hannes'  
wife, Angelika's daughter

**Hannes (45):** Lenka and Nelly's father,  
Christa's husband

**Kaya (16):** Girl from the village, later becomes  
a friend of Lenka's

**Supporting cast / Day roles:**

**Man:** Ogle's Lenka

**Friend 1:** Friend of Christa's at the party

**Friend 2:** Friend of Christa's at the party

**Extras:**

Friends of the family from Berlin, children,  
friend's daughter (12)

Instead of clinging to the  
 fact of being born, as good  
 sense bids, I take the risk,  
 I turn back, I retrogress  
 increasingly toward some  
 unknown beginning, I move  
 from origin to origin. Some  
 day, perhaps, I shall manage  
 to reach origin itself, in  
 order to rest there, or be  
 wrecked.

E.M. Cioran, *Drawn and Quartered*

The wicked spoor left in  
 time's wake as it flees us.  
 You precursors, feet  
 bleeding. Gazes without  
 eyes, words that stem from  
 no mouth. Shapes without  
 bodies. Descended  
 heavenward, separated in  
 remote graves, resurrected  
 from the dead, still  
 forgiving those who trespass  
 against us, the sorrowful  
 patience of angels or of  
 Job. And we, still greedy  
 for the ashen taste of  
 words. Not yet mute as is  
 suitable. Say please, thank  
 you. Please. Thank you.

Christa Wolf, *No Place on Earth*

- 1 INT./EXT. SUN / BEHIND CLOSED EYELIDS - DAY 1
- A POV of the sun in the sky.
- It's blinding.
- Eyelids close.
- Behind them a hue of orange is shimmering, billowing, pulsating.
- 2 INT. BARN - DAY 2
- In the 2020s
- From diagonally above, the back of a young girl's head. She's about five years old.
- She takes two steps, until her feet touch the edge of the threshing floor. Below her is a steep drop.
- The fine blond hairs on the back of her neck stand on end like antennae.
- She spreads her arms.
- Her knees bend slightly, springing back as she jumps off.
- She spins through the air before plummeting into the depths.
- She falls and falls. Suddenly: Darkness. It fills the screen.
- 3 BLACK SCREEN 3
- We plunge into darkness. Gliding through it, carried by it. Floating through it.
- In midst of this darkness, a sudden noise: A thunderous bubbling, a loud, inescapable rumbling, like a primal roar.
- From the darkness the afterimage of the girl who jumped is formed. Her silhouette is like the negative image of the last thing you see before closing your eyes to sleep. It imprints itself in the mind's eye.
- 4 EXT. FIELD - DAY 4
- In the 1910s
- As quickly as they can, children's hands gather up the individual ears of corn that were left behind during the mowing and binding.
- Slightly stooped, **ALMA** (7) runs across the freshly mown field, past the skirts of the field workers and her siblings.

The women bind the crops, which are stacked into stooks every five meters, sticking up like little straw tents. Alma runs from stook to stook, collecting the ears of corn.

In the background the men mow in unison. The women bind and tie. The mowing and tying becomes a beat, a rhythm.

The sisters hum a melancholy, age-old melody in canon. The underlying sounds of the binding and mowing gradually amplify and intensify, becoming a menacing soundscape.

Little by little, the view becomes clearer. More and more field workers are revealed. The further away they are, the later they join the canon.

Suddenly, a strong gust of wind whips across the uncultivated field. The gusts intensify, stirring up the sandy soil. Dust sweeps across the field.

The women quickly turn away, shielding their eyes with their arms. It seems almost choreographed, the way their bodies turn inwards, raised arms held in front of their faces, while their song gradually dwindles wherever the wind strikes.

Alma, still crouched on the floor covering her eyes with her hands, peeks through her fingers.

Between the womens' skirts she spots her sister **LIA (15)** in a distant corner of the field. She's the only one who hasn't turned her body away.

Standing there with closed eyes, Lia holds her face and body up to the wind. Eyes still firmly closed, she walks slowly into the wind without knowing where she's stepping, and spreads out her arms.

She leans ever further into the wind, her body at an increasingly slanted angle, looking as if she could take off at any moment.

Alma straightens up from her stooped position and tries to move her hand away in order to see Lia better, but the wind immediately blows a torrent of sand into her eyes. Again she presses her arm protectively over her face and, squinting, peeks over her sleeve.

In this posture she struggles onwards, until she reaches Lia.

Lia keeps her eyes shut, but isn't squinting. She surrenders herself completely to the wind, spreading her arms even wider.

Alma moves her arm away and narrows her eyes.

Cautiously she leans into the wind, and she, too, slowly spreads her arms. The wind carries her. She submits ever more to it.



Her feet lift from the ground.

She's floating.

She rises slowly, her hands making small, wave-like movements, until she's a meter above the ground.

She smiles, opening her mouth, then immediately coughs as sand is blown into her mouth.

The wind disappears abruptly. Not a gust remains.

Alma falls. Just before she crashes to the ground:

CUT TO BLACK.

5 BLACK SCREEN

5

Darkness fills the screen. It sounds as if Alma were in an inner vacuum. As if there was only silence. We linger in this darkness, this disturbance - in the void, until we lose ourselves - we start to lean into this nothingness and are sucked in by it.

Then something flickers, like a momentary interference. It happens so quickly that we can't be sure if we actually saw the image at all - it's as if it were hidden within the darkness...

6 INT. BARN - DAY

6

... The child's hands make a small wave-like movement as she falls.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. FIELD - DAY

7

In the 1910s

Alma crashes to the ground. She coughs out sand, and turns her gaze towards her sister Lia.

She's no longer there.

FADE OUT

8 EXT. DIRT ROAD - TWILIGHT

8

In the 1910s

FADE IN

A shaky image - Alma's POV, from above: Her feet walking along a dirt road.

Suddenly "tick, tick, tick", the POV jumps through different time periods - flashes of the same image but with different feet, wearing different shoes, walking along the same dirt road. Shoes that are more modern, that couldn't have existed at that time. Once, the feet are bare, without shoes.

FADE OUT

9

EXT. DIRT ROAD / FARM - TWILIGHT

9

In the 1910s

T1

FADE IN

Alma's POV: Ahead of her, the backs of the field workers making their way home.

Suddenly, ahead: Lia. In the crowd of people's backs, Alma spots her for a moment. Her rake is slung over her shoulder. Her blond hair tied loosely at the nape of her neck, a few strands escaping. Then once again, Lia is concealed behind the other women. As the crowd moves, Alma catches split second glimpses of Lia:

The wooden handle of the rake Lia is carrying, pressing a small indentation into her shoulder.

The fabric of her smock, thin and worn in that spot.

Lia's hand makes small wave-like movements, as if it remembered what it had to do to lift her off the ground. Sudden darkness.

CUT TO:

T2

FADE IN

Alma's POV: The procession of women's backs splits into different directions. Most of them continue straight ahead down the dirt road, raising their hands in farewell, waving to those who turn off to the right, through the large open gateway leading to the farmyard and its surrounding buildings.

Alma also turns right. The image freezes for a moment, as she recoils inwardly: visible behind the parting crowd of women's backs is a cluster of people, standing with their backs to her in the courtyard. They huddle closely together, in silence. They all appear to be looking at the ground in front of them.

POV starts to shift once again, slowly passing the backs of the crowd. Quiet murmuring can be heard: Hushed, hurried prayers, a sob from somewhere, a whimpering child, someone humming an almost inaudible tune.

For a moment, between the people's shoulders, Alma sees a woman's face staring blankly ahead, her black eyes expressionless. It's **EMMA (36)**, Alma's mother.

The camera POV continues onwards, passing behind the people and circling around them. Suddenly Lia runs into Alma's field of vision, standing at the edge of the crowd. The camera focuses on Lia's hand, noticing something lying on the ground in the blurred background. The camera continues to close in on Lia's hand until suddenly Alma's hand appears in the frame, sliding into her sister's hand. Lia takes Alma's hand in hers, running her thumb across Alma's fingertips. The figure on the floor is in focus now: a dead child lies there. A BOY, five years old. He looks as if he were sleeping.

The boy's mouth is slightly open. A fly crawls along his cheek, approaching the corner of his mouth, before disappearing inside.

Alma stares at the mouth, then the boy's closed eyes, then his mouth again. His mouth. His mouth. But the fly doesn't come back out.

CUT TO:

10

EXT. FARMYARD / FRONT PORCH OF THE HOUSE - DAY

10

In the 2020s

An arm in the sun, small golden hairs on brown skin. The arm moves, lazily shaking off a fly which had just landed on the wrist.

The hand moves up to the ear, tucking blond strands of hair behind it.

The ear is pretty, perfectly shaped. Inside it, a pink earbud belonging to a pair of headphones. Quiet music plays.

Around the neck, a thin, golden necklace.

The lips are full and pouting. Due to a severe overbite, the protruding jaw never lets the mouth fully close. It could have looked strange, yet it has a certain boldness.

The hands roll up the T-shirt a little further.

Exposing the stomach, tanned from the sun.

In the bellybutton a tiny bead of sweat.

A hand with an outstretched index finger enters the frame. It's about to touch the bead of sweat hovering above the bellybutton, before withdrawing again.

**LENKA** (12) observes her friend **KAYA** (16) from the corner of her eye. Kaya is half reclining next to Lenka on the porch step, propping herself up on her elbows, eyes closed with her upturned face reaching out towards the sun.

Lenka lies in the same position as her friend, also propped up by her elbows on the step behind her. The second pink earbud is in her ear.

She observes how her friend's tanned legs lie tilted slightly to one side.

Lenka lets her legs fall similarly to the side.

Kaya's foot is a little turned in. Lenka mirrors her friend's position.

Lenka's gaze wanders from her own legs to her friend's and back to her own. Once again she adapts herself slightly, turning her foot in further, leaning her head to the side, then closing her eyes. Orange sunlight shimmers behind her closed eyelids.

11 INT./EXT. FARMYARD / HOUSE / STAIRWELL / FRITZ' ROOM - DAY

In the 1940s

The afternoon sun blinds **ERIKA** (17) through the windowpane on the stairwell.

She squints briefly. Tiny beads of sweat have formed on her brow.

Erika is attempting to go downstairs on wooden crutches from the upper floor of the house. Only her left leg protrudes from under her skirt. Her right leg is not visible; it appears to have been amputated. The descent down the steep, polished wooden staircase on crutches looks dangerous. She's making slow progress, and needs all her strength. Erika pauses as she hears the voice of her older **BROTHER** (20), hollering loudly in Altmark dialect from the lower floor of the house.

BROTHER

Erika! Erikaaa?!

Erika holds her breath.

BROTHER (CONT'D)

(Low German dialect,  
shouting)

Bring the pigs into the barn!  
Right now!

Erika hears the footsteps angrily receding. Balancing herself as she makes her way down the last few stairs, she stops on the landing in the hallway. From here she can see through the window out onto the farmyard.

Pigs circle the horse trough. Her brother comes running out of the house, forcefully striding across the yard. He grabs a squealing pig, brutally kicking it towards the barn door in frustration.

Erika leans her crutches against the wall and has to hold tightly onto the window sill so as not to fall.

She raises her skirt, tucking it between her chin and her sternum, and unties the shoelace tied around her bent leg.

The shoelace has left deep indentations on her skin. She shakes her leg to get the blood flowing again.

Then she grabs the crutches and walks down the hallway on both legs.

At the end of the hallway on the first floor, she slips silently into a room, leaving the door ajar behind her.

The room is dimly lit, the curtains are drawn, and it takes a moment to become accustomed to the darkness before realizing that there is a man lying in bed beneath the window.

Erika cautiously leans the crutches against the bedside table and approaches the bed, where her uncle **Fritz (49)** lies naked, wrapped in a sheet, taking a "midday nap".

Erika observes his bare upper body. A bead of sweat slides towards Fritz' navel. Erika's finger enters the frame. She touches the bead of sweat with her fingertip and brings it towards her mouth. She flicks the tip of her tongue against her fingertip and tastes the salt.

Her gaze wanders across his body and rests on Fritz' stump, elevated and visible under the sheet. From outside on the yard, Erika's brother can be heard shouting for his sister again.

Silent as a cat, Erika slips out of the room and shuts the door behind her.

Fritz opens his eyes, fiddles with the drapes, and peers through a small hole that he had cut out of the curtain.

Through the hole he has a full view of the farmyard. Erika, having run out of the house, darts onto the yard and into his field of vision. She immediately receives a slap from her brother, who then runs into the stable, leaving Erika alone.

Erika stands amongst the pigs, patting her cheek. She stares up at Fritz' window as if she were looking through the curtain peephole straight at the camera, into our eyes.

Her gaze is bold. She tosses her head back and grins. Then the curtain closes on her.

CUT TO BLACK.

12 INT. HOUSE / KITCHEN - NIGHT

12

In the 1980s

A dead eel's mouth is open in an 'o' shape, as if it had just attempted to take its last breath through its gills. Its small pointed teeth are bared. The fish is lying on a newspaper.

An index finger enters the frame, towards the eel's head. The fingertip pokes into the dead fish's mouth. The other hand presses down on the eel's head, causing the dead fish to bite the finger. When the finger is released from the mouth, tiny teeth marks are visible.

13 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

13

In the 1910s

The maid, **BIG BERTA (32)** is running, giving a FARMHAND (50) a piggyback ride. The farmhand brazenly grabs Big Berta's ample breasts, clutching them and making clicking noises as though he were riding a horse. Big Berta neighs, imitating a horse. Then she laughs heartily, warm and cooing.

It's Sunday, and everyone is wearing their Sunday best.

Alma sits with her sister **GERTI (12)**, and their brother (extra) next to the water pump in the middle of the farmyard, watching amusedly as Big Berta, with the farmhand on her back, races across the yard against Alma's big sister Lia.

Lia is carrying her sister **HEDDA (11)** on her back. Hedda uses a wheelchair, and is known to everyone as 'Little Cripple'. First to the gate wins. All the bystanders (farmhands, maids, siblings) can't help but laugh.

Big Berta runs swiftly, while Little Cripple Hedda can barely hold on to Lia's back as she giggles at the comical pair, Big Berta with the farmhand on her back. What's more, Big Berta is actually rather fast.

Big Berta chuckles cheerfully. Then she reaches the gate, and lets the farmhand down to his feet. He's small in stature, three heads shorter than Berta and half as wide. They're the winning pair, and they raise their arms in triumph.

Little Cripple Hedda and Lia are laughing so hard that Lia doesn't make it to the finish line.

Laughing, Lia stumbles around on the spot.

LIA  
(Low German dialect,  
snorting with laughter)  
Stop! I'm gonna wet myself!

The bystander farmhands and maids, as well as the harvest workers, laugh and clap along with them. A farmhand scoops Little Cripple Hedda up from Lia's back and places her in her wheelchair.

A maid, **ugly TRUDI (17)** stands a little off to the side from the rest. Timid and gaunt, she's leaning against the wall of the house.

(Trudi stands in the shade, leaning against the wall of the house. She takes a cautious step forward and turns her face towards the sun. The sunrays shine on her face.)

As the farmhands pass her by, the mood is still cheerful. One FARMHAND (21) glances briefly at Trudi, noticing her joyless expression. He eyes her, then turns to the harvest worker next to him:

FARMHAND  
(Low German dialect,  
softly to the harvest  
worker)  
Put a potato sack over her head and  
imagine you're doing it for the  
fatherland.

The farmhand and the harvest worker snort at Trudi's helpless look.

Lia's gaze lingers briefly on ugly Trudi. She doesn't know what to do with herself, seeming as if she were not of this world.

Alma observes the way Lia looks at Trudi. Big Berta crosses the frame, snorting. She grabs Lia by the hands and takes two exuberant dance steps as Lia laughs.

Suddenly, bloodcurdling screams can be heard across the entire farmyard. They seem to echo into the yard from one of the upper windows of the farmhouse. All eyes gaze up to the window.

CUT TO BLACK.

14 INT. HOUSE / GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

14

In the 1910s

T1

BLACK

The camera glides through the darkness.

Alma's voice is audible.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 (Low German dialect)  
 Fritz had an accident at work.  
 Work accident, work accident, work  
 accident, work accident...  
 Sometimes, when you repeat a phrase  
 too many times, it dissolves. As  
 though it loses all meaning.

As if from very far away, like a distant memory, shouting and  
 crying.

T2

From the darkness, the outlines of a room slowly emerge. Then  
 we see Alma sitting up in her bed. She hears the cries of  
**FRITZ (17)** reverberating through the house, then the sound of  
 footsteps. Lia opens her eyes. Little Cripple Hedda sits up  
 too. Gerti rubs her eyes and listens to the screams.

HEDDA  
 (Low German dialect)  
 Are they gonna cut off his other  
 leg too?

LIA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 shaking her head,  
 unfazed)  
 Those are phantom pains. The doctor  
 said that could happen.

The screaming subsides.

HEDDA  
 (Low German dialect)  
 It's stopped now.

Lia pricks up her ears and listens.

LIA  
 (Low German dialect)  
 No, he's just quiet because they  
 stuck a stick in his mouth. If you  
 listen closely you can still hear  
 him whimpering... Can you hear it?

Alma listens intently into the darkness. But the longer she  
 listens, the more she hears only a murmur, a crescendoing  
 crackling.



T3

Her thoughts float through the house at night, along the hallways; her gaze approaches the ever louder screams.

The maid, ugly Trudi, scurries across the hallway with a candle and disappears behind a door. Alma's gaze approaches this door, behind which the whimpering is becoming louder and more piercing.

Through the crack in the door, illuminated by candlelight, we see 17-year-old Fritz lying in bed. He's drenched in sweat, whimpering in pain with a stick between his teeth. His stump is propped up on the bed and he keeps rearing up, trying to grab at his missing leg. His mother Emma pushes him into the pillows, while Fritz slaps her arms away.

Ugly Trudi notices that Fritz has become even more distraught with his mother Emma by his side. With a meaningful glance, Trudi signals to her that it might be better if she were to leave the room.

Emma gives up and exits the room into the hallway. Ugly Trudi shuts the door behind her. Suddenly, it becomes dark in the hallway.

Once again, it takes a moment to adjust to the darkness, before we notice Emma standing indecisively outside the closed door. She freezes suddenly, as though she can sense someone watching her. She looks up, staring directly at the camera with her dark eyes.

ALMA (V.O.)  
(Low German dialect)  
Pretty strange that something can  
still hurt, even when it's not  
there anymore.

15 INT. FARMYARD / HOUSE / ANGELIKA'S ROOM 1ST FLOOR - DAY 15

In the 1980s

In the blunted edge of the mirror, **ANGELIKA'S (16)** body appears as though viewed through a kaleidoscope. Dancing lasciviously to the music, she appears before our eyes in rainbow colors, multiplied into star-like patterns.

Angelika dances in her room in front of the mirror.

She's wearing only pantyhose, and is naked from the waist up. She sings along to the song, pinching her nipples. She puts her T-shirt on, checking how her nipples look under it, pinches one again and continues dancing.

On her bed sit three children, Angelika's cousins. The two boys, ten and eight years old, stare at her open mouthed, while the five-year-old girl watches her earnestly.

In an armchair in the corner of the room sits her cousin **RAINER (16)**, the same age as Angelika. He's bouncing a small rubber ball on the floor, ignoring Angelika, who's checking in the mirror to see if he's watching her. As if he could sense it, he only lifts his gaze once she's put her T-shirt back on.

Angelika sees him in the mirror, lifts her T-shirt once more and sticks her tongue out at him. It seems she wants him to look at her.

Rainer quickly averts his gaze back to the floor and keeps bouncing the rubber ball.

Angelika sways gently to the music, admiring herself in the mirror and pulling the T-shirt tighter around her waist. She turns around, still dancing, and looks questioningly at her audience, their gaze fixed on her T-shirt.

The boys can't get a single word out. The little girl nods solemnly, as though she were Angelika's trusted advisor.

Angelika hands her a safety pin and sits down on the bed in front of her. Her cousin fastens the T-shirt in the back with the safety pin, so that it fits more snugly on Angelika's body.

Angelika kisses the top of the girl's head, jumps to her feet and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

The children run to the open window and watch her. Below them in the farmyard, the party is already in full swing.

Rainer hurls the rubber ball aggressively against the bedroom wall, and doesn't watch her go. But he sees Angelika's reflection in the window pane, as she steps out into the yard and disappears into the crowd.

16 EXT. FARMYARD - EVENING

16

In the 1980s

T1

Angelika comes walking out of the house. The party in the yard is already in full swing, with many people from the village and the surrounding area standing or sitting on beer benches, scattered around the yard, eating sausages and drinking beer. A few of them stand gathered around a table, which was set up in the middle of the yard and on which stands a large vat of eels.

Angelika's uncle **UWE (48)** blows the starting whistle. This signals one of the farmers to ride his bicycle along the uneven stone-paved ground.

As he passes, he has to grab an eel out of the vat. Children, women and farmers are gathered to cheer him on.

Angelika's father **ALBAT (54)** spots her. He calls her over to him by whistling and calling her name.

ALBAT

Angelika!

Angelika turns, seeing her father Albat, equipped with a cool-box hanging on his chest, filling cones with Fürst-Pückler (chocolate-strawberry-vanilla) ice cream before distributing them to children. Angelika squeezes through the crowd and goes over to him. He hands her an ice cream cone over the heads of the children waiting in line. Angelika beams at him, taking the ice cream.

ANGELIKA

Thanks, Daddy!

Albat winks at her as she takes the ice cream.

Ice cream in hand, Angelika weaves through the crowd and approaches the table with the eels.

T2

She stares at the spectacle, spellbound, as she licks her ice cream. It's another farmer's turn now to ride his bicycle past the vat of eels. Everyone roars and cheers as he succeeds in catching an eel, Angelika included.

The farmer triumphantly raises the wriggling eel into the air, before throwing it alive into another vat filled with salt. The eel twitches and writhes in the salt.

Angelika's mother, **IRM (56)** is up next. Angelika isn't cheering anymore, falling completely silent. She watches her mother tensely as she cycles over the bumpy ground to the starting point. Irm starts to wobble from the moment she sets off. She laughs loudly to conceal her embarrassment.

Now that Irm is in position, Angelika sees her mother's flushing cheeks.

Uncle Uwe's starting whistle sounds once more, and Irm cycles uncertainly over the uneven ground.

Her breasts jiggle as she does. Irm can feel the men's eyes on her breasts. She hunches her shoulders in an attempt to conceal them.

She fails to catch the eel and loses her balance on the bicycle, catching herself just in time to avoid falling. One of the farmers grabs an eel and shows it to her with a grin.

FARMER

That's how it's done.

The nearby farmers laugh. Irm stares at the eel, its mouth open in an 'o' shape, gasping for air. The farmer returns it to the vat.

FARMER (CONT'D)  
Come on, one more try!

Irm laughs, downplaying her nervousness.

IRM  
Oh dear, someone else should go instead.

She looks around, wanting to hand the bike over to the farmer. He presses it back into her hands.

FARMER  
You've got this!

IRM  
I'm just too clumsy for this.

Irm looks around anxiously, still smiling, and everyone returns her gaze encouragingly.

Angelika looks through the crowd and sees her father Albat, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, turn away. He looks as desperate to wriggle away as an eel as he can't bear to watch the situation unfold. He turns his back and sneaks away. When Angelika's eyes wander back to her mother, her eyes meet those of her uncle Uwe, who's staring at her. For a moment, their eyes lock. Then Angelika averts her gaze and looks again at her mother.

Irm has no choice. She wraps her hands around the handlebars and pushes the bike back to the starting position.

The onlookers applaud her encouragingly.

They start to call out Irm's name, louder and louder, to cheer her on.

As Irm passes Angelika, she avoids making eye contact with her daughter. Angelika can see that behind her mother's embarrassed laughter, her neck is turning red and blotchy.

Irm tries to discreetly button up her cardigan over her breasts with one hand while pushing the bicycle with her back to the crowd - unsuccessfully. She would need to lay down the bicycle for a moment in order to use both hands, but that would be too conspicuous.

So Irm mounts her bike again and rides precariously down the stone-paved path. Her breasts bounce up and down as she goes, and once again she can feel the stares.

She reaches into the vat as she rides past. Her hand dips into the water, she touches an eel which slips through her hand. She quickly pulls her hand out again without grabbing an eel.

She looks as if she were in a trance, no longer able to laugh along with the others for even a moment. She jumps off the bicycle, looking past the crowd of people as if seeing right through them, before suddenly noticing the stares of those around her again. She waves them away, laughing at her own ineptness.

IRM (CONT'D)

Okay, but now somebody else should try. I'm never lucky at things like this anyway.

The farmer shakes his head.

FARMER

Now don't be silly, it's got nothing to do with luck.

Irm laughs. The farmer doesn't.

FARMER (CONT'D)

Let's go! Back to the starting line.

Angelika steps out from the crowd, wanting to take the bike out of her mother's hands.

ANGELIKA

Give it to me, Mom, I'll do it.

With lightning speed, the farmer grabs Angelika's arm as she reaches for the bike's handlebars. Angelika freezes. The farmer looks at her.

FARMER

Don't worry, your turn will come. First let Mommy go.

Angelika stares at the crowd. One could have heard a pin drop. Then she glances at the farmer's hand, still clutching her wrist, before looking him in the eye. He returns her gaze, then lets go of her wrist, smiling again as he bemusedly turns back to the bystanders.

FARMER (CONT'D)

We can't allow the lady of the house to be the only one who doesn't catch any fish.

The onlookers laugh.

Irm grabs hold of the handlebars and pushes the bike forward almost defiantly, setting it in motion.

Angelika's hand is slapped out of the way. Irm pushes the bike past her, back to the starting point yet again without batting an eyelid. She's letting it happen again. Angelika stares after her in horror.

17

INT. BARN - EVENING

17

In the 1980s

Angelika bites down as hard as she can on the taut flap of skin between the thumb and index finger of a hand.

ANGELIKA

Now?

A BOY (19) lying on the hay shakes his head. It's his hand that Angelika has in her mouth.

Angelika has left the party along with the other village children of her own age. They sit in the hay in the barn passing around a bottle of schnapps. All eyes are on Angelika, half lying on top of the boy as she's biting his hand. Angelika tests how hard she can bite him before it hurts.

Noises from the party are still audible through the closed barn doors. A persistent knocking then drowns out the other sounds, though we cannot see from where it comes.

Angelika looks at the boy, biting down harder. Hand still in her mouth, she speaks.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)

Now?

The boy shakes his head.

Angelika clamps down her teeth with all her might. The boy's other hand is clutching the hay as he closes his eyes. One of the girls extends her head, to get a better view over a haystack.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)

Now?

The boy can no longer respond. He's too focused on enduring the pain, which he doesn't want to show.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)

Now?

The knocking sound in the background suddenly stops. Rainer, Angelika's cousin, who's sitting slightly apart from the group on a haystack, stops throwing his rubber ball against a wooden beam for a moment and looks over to Angelika and the boy.

The boy starts to squirm, emitting pained noises. The other teenagers look at him bemusedly. The boy attempts to retrieve his hand from Angelika's mouth, but she refuses to let go, biting as hard as a dog. The boy starts to grab her and push her into the hay, pinching her in the side with his free hand. When she still doesn't let go, he pinches her nipple.

Angelika jumps to her feet in a flash and runs over to Rainer. She collapses into his lap and clings to him, whimpering coyly that Rainer must protect her from the boy.

The boy instructs Rainer to hold onto Angelika as he scrambles out of the hay to chase her.

Rainer wraps his arms limply and uncertainly around Angelika. Angelika playfully buries her face in Rainer's neck, squealing and hunching her shoulders, sensing that the other boy is approaching. She clutches Rainer even tighter. Her breasts press into Rainer's chest. He freezes. Suddenly she springs to her feet, screeching.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)

Ewww! He's got a boner!

She looks at the others. They're laughing. Rainer's cheeks turn red.

RAINER

No I don't!

Angelika tries to grab his crotch. Rainer resists, pushes her away with his hands. One of the girls calls out to him challengingly.

GIRL

Stand up!

Rainer pretends not to hear the girl. He continues to fight off Angelika, blushing even more and sweating profusely.

CUT TO:

18

EXT./INT. FARMYARD / BARN - NIGHT

18

In the 1980s

The last drunk partygoers leave the yard, staggering out through the gateway. A woman slaps her husband on his backside as they go.

Angelika and her uncle Uwe are carrying the large table, on which the vat of eels stood earlier, back into the barn.

ANGELIKA

Will you drive me to Glöwisch later?

They put the table away. Uncle Uwe eyes her, lighting a cigarette.

UWE  
Glöwisch? What do you want to go  
there for? Disco?

Angelika approaches him.

ANGELIKA  
Maybe?

Uncle Uwe looks at her coolly, taking a drag on his cigarette as he observes her.

UWE  
Where were you for so long earlier?

Angelika eyes him. She stands directly in front of him. She reaches for his cigarette, attempting to take it from him to take a drag herself. He smiles and taps his forehead as if to say "In your dreams". He doesn't give her the cigarette.

Angelika takes a step back, trying to regain control of the situation.

ANGELIKA  
Drinking schnapps with the others.

Uwe stares at her. The veins in his temples start to throb. Angelika sways slightly on the spot.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)  
So will you drive me to Glöwisch?

Uwe flicks the cigarette butt into the vat of water in which the eels were swimming earlier.

UWE  
Sorry, got other plans.

Angelika breaks loose and leaves the barn, Uwe calling after her as she runs out.

UWE (CONT'D)  
How're you gonna get to Glöwisch  
now?

Angelika laughs softly as she keeps walking, and stretches out her arm, unfazed, as though she were already hitchhiking on the roadside. She takes a few steps backwards, arm still outstretched. Uwe takes a couple of steps towards her. The idea of her hitchhiking triggers something in him, something he doesn't like. Angelika senses this, turning her back on him again, aware of his gaze. With a smile on her lips she crosses the dark yard, calling out to the last few stragglers who couldn't tear themselves away and are chatting in a small group behind the open gateway on the village street:



ANGELIKA

Go on home, all of you!

She passes her cousin Rainer, standing outside one of the stables in the dark, throwing his ball against the brick wall. Rainer watches her go, and his gaze falls on his father, smoking outside the barn door and watching Angelika.

Angelika crosses the yard. From the porch steps she picks up the leftover plates from the buffet, and enters the house through the double doors.

She darts over the tiled floor with its water lily pattern, down the hallway. As she turns the corner she stops suddenly in the semi-darkness of the kitchen doorway.

CUT TO:

19 INT. HOUSE / HALLWAY / KITCHEN - NIGHT

19

In the 1980s

From the doorway she watches her mother Irm, staring at the dead eel in her hands which she holds in an open newspaper. Now Irm studies the tip of her index finger, into which the eel's teeth have left a tiny bite mark.

The threshold creaks under Angelika's feet. Irm's gaze snaps up, and she laughs as soon as she sees Angelika, quickly wrapping the dead eel back into the paper as Angelika carries the dishes into the kitchen and places them on the table.

Angelika scoops out some leftover pasta salad from one of the dishes and shoves it into her mouth. She watches her mother turn her back to her, bending to stash the fish in the fridge. Irm chatters away cheerfully.

IRM

Went well today. Everyone was happy  
and satisfied.

The sound of the scene fades out until we can no longer hear Irm's words. A murmur grows louder as Angelika, chewing, watches her mother. Angelika's voice can be heard as voice over in the next scene.

20 EXT. FARMYARD / FRONT PORCH OF THE HOUSE - DAY

20

In the 1980s

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

We played a trick on Mom for her  
birthday once(...)

Irm rushes out of the house, hastening down the stairs at full speed without looking up. She's rummaging in her purse for the car keys, fishes them out, looks up and recoils. Her 'Trabi', a car from the GDR, is wedged tightly between two oak trees, without an inch of wiggle room.

Irm approaches the car, staring at the Trabi in disdain. She looks around. There's no one to be seen. She gets into the car, starts the engine and turns the steering wheel. She tries to inch forward, but it's impossible.

Suddenly, her friends and family jump out at Irm from behind the house. Her husband Albat pops a champagne cork, and everyone sings happy birthday to her - "Long may she live! Three cheers!" - Meanwhile, the men lift the Trabi into the air, with Irm still inside.

Angelika stands amongst the others and observes her mother Irm, the way she sits in the car, clinging tightly to the dashboard. She looks like a deer in the headlights, as the crowd laughs and sings to her. The image starts to flicker, becoming grainy, as the sound recedes into the background. Angelika's voice continues speaking.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

Mom somehow never knew when to laugh. If something was funny, she didn't laugh. But if something bad happened, she did. When somebody died, for example. Then she suddenly started laughing and laughing really loudly, and couldn't stop.

The image of Irm in the swaying Trabi freezes.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. HAVEL RIVER BRANCH - TWILIGHT

21

In the 1940s

Silence. In slow motion: It's almost completely dark. Smiling faces of young women. They enter the river wearing dresses. The water splashes over them. Erika looks directly at the camera. Behind her, the women take their children into the water. For a moment, her face looks like a grimace. Is she laughing or crying?

CUT TO BLACK.

22 INT. ANIMATED FILM / HOUSE / ROOM - DAY

22

In the 2020s

An animated film fills the screen: Young Mandy rides her horse Trixie through a small stream, water splashing onto her.

Mandy throws back her head and shakes her head of full, shiny blond hair. She laughs, overcome with joy, mouth wide open - cooing and exuberant. She glances over her shoulder, beaming.

MANDY  
(giggling)  
Look! The butterflies and the flowers!  
(more cheerful giggling)

Mandy's friend Mariella, riding her horse behind her, giggles too, exaggeratedly happy. She makes a clicking noise to urge her horse onwards.

MANDY (CONT'D)  
Come on Trixie, faster!

Mandy's mare Trixie picks up speed, also snorting in joy and exuberance.

Lenka and her little sister **NELLY** (5) are sprawled on the sofa, munching on croissants and watching the animated horseback riding series "Mandy" on Christa's tablet.

Mandy and her friend continue to laugh manically from the tablet, when the girls' mother **CHRISTA** (42) enters the room.

CHRISTA  
Come on, turn that thing off now.

Christa attempts to pry the tablet out of Lenka's hand. Lenka clutches it tightly and stretches out her legs towards her mother to ward her off. Christa grabs Lenka's feet.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Icy feet!

Lenka inches her feet under Christa's T-shirt. Christa lets out a shivering sound.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Brrr! Like icicles! Come on, into the sunshine. You two need to get some exercise.

She tries to grab the tablet again, but Lenka pushes her feet into her mother's stomach and holds the tablet out of her reach. Mandy's laughter is still emanating from the tablet. Christa frees herself from Lenka's ice cold feet and removes her T-shirt and pants.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Go play outside, it's such a lovely day.

No reaction. Christa, standing there in her underwear, chucks her T-shirt at the children.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Hellooo! Earth to daughters.

Christa eventually manages to pry the tablet from Lenka's grasp and switches it off. Her daughters grumble in protest.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Enough now.

Lenka groans.

LENKA  
But it's so boring.

Christa puts on tattered clothing to do the gardening.

CHRISTA  
You can help me with the flower beds,  
a lot of worms there now.

Nelly gets to her feet. Lenka, visibly unenthusiastic, flings herself lazily onto the sofa.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Come on.

Lenka grumbles in dissent. Nelly follows her mother into the garden. Lenka stays behind, listening to the receding footsteps as the back door opens then quietly closes again. Silence.

Lenka lies face down on the sofa. She runs her cold foot over the grooved bedspread fabric, which is draped over the sofa as a makeshift throw.

Lenka's arm is dangling off the side of the sofa. She gazes at the parquet floor caked in dust, and sees the crumbs of the croissant that she's just eaten.

The sudden silence descends on Lenka. It's so quiet that the silence seems to echo off the walls and starts to reverberate in Lenka's ears. Suddenly, we see Lenka from above, hovering a couple of meters above her.

She sits up hurriedly, trying to break her inner tension.

Lenka looks to the window, then the table, at the vase holding the wilted wildflowers. She lets her gaze wander around the room, across the old wallpaper, the chair on which Christa's pants lie crumpled where she threw them off.

This space which appeared so harmless a moment ago now seems to have been transformed. Something bubbles up from deep within her. A wave of unease washes over her. She springs to her feet and rushes out of the room.

We linger for a long moment on the half open door, focusing behind it, on the ochre colored tile stove in the corner.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. GARDEN - DAY

23

In the 2020s

Lenka dashes through the garden towards her mother. She hugs her mother tightly. But something inside of Lenka is left behind in that room. She's unable to shake the feeling.

Lenka presses her face into the fabric of her mother's T-shirt.

In the background she sees Nelly, jumping off a pile of old bricks and pretending she's flying.

Lenka can't help but think of the room, the way it now lies abandoned. We see what Lenka imagines in her mind's eye...

CUT TO:

24 INT. HOUSE / ROOM - DAY

24

In the 2020s

... like the dent in the sofa's fabric on the spot where she was lying just moment ago, the sofa slowly regaining its original shape because the weight of her body is no longer there...

CUT TO:

25 EXT. GARDEN - DAY

25

... Lenka presses her head closer against her mother's body.

BLACK.

26 INT. HOUSE / ROOM MID-RENOVATION - DAY

26

In the 2020s

T1

Christa smashes a GDR-era tiled stove with a sledgehammer.

We watch her continue until the entire oven lies strewn across the floor in bits and pieces.

Christa shovels rubble out of the window, into a wheelbarrow waiting beneath it.

CUT TO:

T2 1st floor (Granary room)

Christa and Lenka carry a table through the rubble into the room. Nelly wants to help, but just gets in the way.

CHRISTA  
(to Nelly)  
Nelly, move please, it's heavy!

Nelly steps aside and feels a little miffed as she watches her sister and mother toil away.

CUT TO:

T3 1st floor (Granary room)

Christa stands amidst the rubble, surrounded by clouds of dust. She examines the table, now surrounded by four chairs. The children can be heard in the background, running through the house and laughing. When Nelly runs through the frame, her arms are spread widely. She imitates the sound of a propeller, as though she were about to take off.

Christa examines the table.

After a while she approaches the table and moves the chair a few centimeters. She returns to her spot and looks at the table and chairs once more.

27 EXT. DIRT ROAD TO HAVEL RIVER BRANCH - DAY

27

In the 2020s

T1

The sound of wind and rustling leaves.

Nelly's POV - her small feet treading the sandy dirt road. (Exactly as Alma's feet walked this path). She quickens her pace, starting to run, until her feet lift off from the ground. Nelly's feet are in the air, hovering above the path.

CUT TO:

T2

From behind at a distance, we see Nelly walking along the dirt road between Christa and Lenka.

We can just about hear them calling "Fly high, little bird" as they hoist Nelly into the air.

Nelly pulls her feet in, to increase the distance between herself and the ground. Supported under her armpits by Lenka and Christa, she floats high above the earth.

Their voices grow quieter and quieter, fading away as the leaves, rustling in the wind, grow louder. It's like seeing a memory that's slowly fading, like watching something that happened a long time ago. The path curves and all three disappear from sight. The camera lingers on the empty road. The sound of rustling leaves swells.

CUT TO:

28

EXT. HAVEL RIVER BRANCH - DAY

28

In the 2020s

Underwater noises, gurgling sounds, like many air bubbles rising.

Nelly stands in the river, repeatedly diving beneath the surface to practise her underwater handstands.

When she surfaces, she proudly holds a handful of sand from the Havel's riverbed.

CUT TO:

Sand trickles out of Lenka's hand, pouring onto her knee before streaming down the sides of her leg onto the sandy banks of the Havel. Lenka's other hand presses the hair from her ponytail onto her shoulder, to cover the skin that's starting to burn. She has buried her feet in the sand.

CUT TO:

Christa's hands hold an open book up to the blue sky, shielding herself from the sun. Her hand turns a page, then she lowers the book. The sun is blinding, making her squint. She rests the book on her stomach.

Covering her eyes with the back of her hand, she slightly lifts her head. Below her shielding hand she looks briefly at Nelly, who's playing in the water, then at Lenka, sitting on a sandbank a little further away, letting sand trickle over her knee. Christa lowers her head again, briefly looking directly into the sun before closing her eyes. The sound ends abruptly. Absolute silence, like an audio dropout.

Behind her eyelids, the orange flickering. Above her a shadow which then disappears as her hand slips from her eyes because she's fallen asleep.

In the distance we see Christa lying on her towel in the sand. In the background, leaves are swaying on the trees and gusts of wind blow through the reeds - although we don't hear a sound. The camera glides towards them, revealing Lenka, sitting further behind in the sand. Nelly's in the water, yelling something, although we can't hear what. There is complete silence. The camera glides towards Christa.

Her face in the sun, the wind in her hair, no sound, her mouth slightly open. Suddenly, she sits up, her eyes opening abruptly. All sounds return immediately, loud and clear: Nelly splashing in the water, the rustling of the reeds and the trees. Dazed, Christa touches her head, rummaging in her purse for her watch.

Nelly calls out loudly.

NELLY

Mommy, look, just one arm. Look!

Nelly plunges under the surface. To her disappointment, when she looks up again, she sees that Christa is rummaging through her purse.

NELLY (CONT'D)

Aww Mommy! You didn't watch me!

CHRISTA

Yes I did. That was greaaat, sweetie!

NELLY

Uh-uh, not true. You weren't looking.

CHRISTA

How would you know? You were underwater.

As her mother and Nelly argue, Lenka spots a sun-tanned girl (Kaya) in the distance, silently gliding behind a reed-covered dune on a paddleboard. It looks almost surreal, as though the river diverges behind her and continues down a different branch.

Lenka springs to her feet and sets off. Christa calls after her.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

LENKA

(to her mother)

Just to pee, back in a sec.

29 EXT. FOOTPATH / HAVEL HIDDEN COVE - DAY

29

In the 2020s

T1

Lenka's POV: she walks through the reeds until she comes across a small footpath, which she follows. Odd sobbing and whimpering are audible.

The path leads to a small hidden cove. Kaya is sitting there on the rocks, soaking wet, paddle board by her side. She's smoking a cigarette and sobbing, lost in thought.



Lenka moves, making a cracking sound, and Kaya looks up. The girls lock eyes for a moment, then with lightning speed, Kaya grabs the stone next to her and throws it at Lenka. It hits her on the shoulder. Lenka runs away as fast as she can, as she's pelted with a torrent of stones. She runs all the way back.

T2

Christa stands knee-deep in the water, Nelly happily bobbing up and down next to her mother. Lenka approaches them at speed, out of breath as she calls out.

LENKA

Can we go now?

Christa, who was contemplating her feet in the water, looks up. Lenka glances tensely over her shoulder to see if the girl is still behind her, ready to appear at any moment.

LENKA (CONT'D)

Right now?!

Lenka is already packing up her towel into her beach bag.

NELLY

But I don't wanna leave yet!

30

EXT. HAVEL DIKE - DAY

30

In the 2020s

T1

Teeth chattering, Nelly stubbornly trudges across the Havel embankment in her swimsuit.

Her towel, flung over her shoulder, keeps slipping down, and she's carrying her shoes and clothes in her hand, some of which are trailing along the ground behind her.

Lenka and Christa are ahead of her. They're walking while playing a walking game, with a little rhyme "A hat, a stick, an umbrella, forwards, backwards, sideways..."

Nelly abruptly stops.

She lifts her foot and brushes away the small pebbles that have dug into her bare sole. She's lightly bleeding in one spot.

She looks up, wanting to call her mother, but something holds her back. Teeth chattering, Nelly notices how the two are quite a distance away by now, and seem to have forgotten that she exists.

Nelly lets her things fall to the ground around her. She watches Lenka and Christa recede into the distance, before finally disappearing behind the bend in the dike.

T2

A wind sweeps past Nelly.

The fine hairs on her neck stand up like antennae.

She stares at the bend in the dike, but neither her mother nor sister reappears.

The wind blows harder. The sound of rustling leaves grows louder. Shivering, Nelly pulls the towel tighter around her shoulders. Nobody comes. Nelly sits on the warm asphalt, sniffing, and stares at the bend in the dike.

She looks down the embankment towards the river. The water splashes onto the shore.

Her gaze returns to the bend in the dike. Nobody.

Then she looks again to the depths, fixating on the streaks left by the current. The light reflects off the water's surface, sending tiny glimmers to dance on Nelly. She suddenly feels very calm, imagining a point on the water, and her teeth stop chattering.

She shuts her eyes. The wind blows across her face. Nelly tilts her body sideways, letting herself roll down the steep slope of the Havel's embankment. She tumbles down, picking up speed. She keeps rolling around and around until she splashes into the water.

T3

Under the water she lets go of her towel, which rises to the surface. She goes deeper. She surrenders herself to the water, allowing herself to sink.

A gurgling sound, air bubbles rising. Then silence.

From very far away, muffled by the water - shouting.

CHRISTA (O.S.)  
Neeeeellllyyyyy!!! Neeeeellllyyy!!!!

CUT TO:

T4

Christa appears at the bend in the dike. She sees Nelly's shoes, bag and clothes lying abandoned at the river's edge. Her gaze falls on the water and her eyes widen. She starts to run, calling Nelly's name in alarm.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Neeeeelllly!!!!

She runs sideways down the steep embankment, her legs sinking knee-deep into the sand. As she pulls them out she stumbles, free falling halfway down the embankment before skidding across the sand as the thistles cut her legs...

CUT TO:

T5

Nelly is sitting on the Havel dike and gazes down to the river at her imaginary point.

Then across the path of the Havel dike, focusing on the curve.

But Christa doesn't appear.

31 EXT./INT. CAR / ROAD TO HAVEL DIKE - DAY

31

In the 2020s

POV: Nelly's view backwards out of the moving car. The river recedes. Soon it will disappear behind the hill.

NELLY (O.S.)  
If you can't see the river anymore, is it still there, or is it gone?

CHRISTA (O.S.)  
Hm...  
(thinks for a moment)  
Well, if Dad were to stand next to the river now, you could call him and ask if he could see it or not. What do you think he would say?

NELLY (O.S.)  
I don't know. Probably that he sees the river and that he's standing right in front of it.

CHRISTA (O.S.)  
Yeah you're right, I think that's exactly what he would say.

The river disappears behind the hill, and is no longer visible.

Lenka leans her forehead against the cool window pane.

She runs her index finger pensively along the groove between the window pane and the plastic casing of the door panel. After a long while, she speaks without raising her gaze.

LENKA

But what happens when Nelly hangs up?  
How will she know if Dad is still  
there?

Without sound: Lenka's face in profile, shifting in and out of focus. Behind her, through the window pane, the landscape streaks by. It's as if Lenka were merging into the background.

32

INT. HOUSE / UPPER FLOOR / ROOM - EVENING

32

In the 2020s

Almost dusk, only the last rays of evening sun shine into the room. Christa sits with her daughters at the table, amidst the rubble. A linen cloth is spread across the table, with three burning tealights.

Nelly sits on the left in a bathrobe, her hair wet. Her legs are swinging and she eats her baguette while staring absentmindedly at an imaginary point on the table.

Lenka wears a towel wrapped like a turban around her head, which is laid sideways on her arms, resting on the tabletop. She smells the skin on her arm and gazes at one of the candles in front of her.

Christa sits slightly further away from the table with her back to it. Her gently rocking feet are propped up on the sill of the open window. She gazes out into the yard, where the brick walls glow red in the last rays of the evening sun. She's holding a glass of white wine in her hand and smoking a cigarette. Her hair is wet, too.

Lenka is still sniffing her arm, inhaling the scent.

LENKA

I loooove when skin has that musty  
river smell.

Christa smiles, adding:

CHRISTA

And the smell of a cellar. I know.

LENKA

I looove the smell of cellar. I'm  
addicted to it.

NELLY

And nail polish.

LENKA

Yeah, ..but not quite as much as  
cellar smell.

(MORE)

LENKA (CONT'D)

First cellar smell, then river-on-your-skin, and then nail polish.

They sit like this for a moment. Lenka starts to kiss the skin of her arm. A car driving into the yard becomes audible.

CHRISTA

Dad's here.

Nelly jumps to her feet, running to the furthest left of the three windows, and opens it. Car doors opening and slamming shut can be heard. A contented groan from **HANNES (45)**, off screen, who seems to be stretching after a long car journey.

HANNES (OFF)

Ahh, fuck me, isn't it lovely here?! I can't bear the city.

(beat)

Kids, isn't it lovely here?!

Christa laughs. Nelly squeals contentedly, hopping up and down excitedly, babbling eagerly that she can do a handstand underwater now, that he has to take her to the Havel tomorrow... Only Lenka remains silent. In the background Christa rises to her feet, calling something to Hannes through the window, which is inaudible as the scene is now muted. A soft hissing noise fills the soundtrack. Lenka dips her finger into the liquid wax of the tealight. The hissing grows louder. The camera approaches Lenka as though a ghost were floating towards her, resting on her as she dips her finger into the liquid wax.

Then:

LENKA (V.O.)

(whispering)

Too bad that you never know when you're happiest.

Lenka looks up as though she senses someone watching her, then looks directly at the camera and stares at us.

33

INT. HOUSE / HALLWAY / KITCHEN - DAY

33

In the 1910s

T1

A bustling scene. Maids and farmhands cross the frame, rushing hurriedly past Alma, Lia, Gerti and a little boy (extra) with piles of freshly ironed tablecloths and polished candlesticks. The children stand hidden under the staircase in the hallway, watching the hustle and bustle, unnoticed.

Apparently preparations for a celebration of some kind are underway.

Alma and her siblings watch as Big Berta slips off her slippers on the doorstep, leaves the kitchen, then puts on her shoes at the back door and disappears into the garden.

The children look at each other: Now the coast is clear!

Alma and the little boy scamper into the kitchen while Gerti and Lia stand guard in the hallway, by the door to the yard, peering out.

Soup simmers away in a huge copper cauldron.

Alma and the little boy bend down to the neatly arranged wooden slippers, waiting on the kitchen doorstep for Berta's return.

Alma and her brother can't help but giggle as Alma holds the slippers steady while the boy hammers long nails into them. First the nails pierce the slippers, then the woodenbeam beneath them. Alma tries to move the slippers, but they are firmly stuck to the beam.

She and her brother look towards the door. Gerti's in the hallway, gesturing: Quickly! Alma and the boy scurry back into the hallway, disappearing with Gerti and Lia behind the staircase to the upper floor. They hold their mouths shut to stop from laughing out loud.

GERTI

Shhh!

The four children's heads peek out from behind the staircase, listening for approaching footsteps from the direction of the garden.

Berta enters the hallway, carrying fresh herbs from the garden. Before she enters the kitchen, she slips out of her shoes and into her slippers.

The children watch eagerly, squirming as they try to suppress their laughter.

Berta jauntily attempts to walk off, but her feet won't follow.

She tries to reach for the aprons hanging on hooks on the wall next to her, but she grasps at thin air.

Big Berta tumbles face first to the ground, barely managing to break her fall with her hands. Bewildered, she looks at her slippered feet, which aren't moving. She reaches for the slippers, trying in vain to lift them.

Alma, the boy and Hedda can't contain themselves any longer. A snort erupts from their hiding place in the corner.

Berta wheels around. The children dart out of the corner laughing as they run down the hallway.

BERTA  
(yelling in Low German  
dialect)  
You little rascals, just you  
wait!

Big Berta scrambles to her feet in a flash, grabs the soup ladle and rushes into the hallway, wielding the ladle. She chases the children back into the kitchen, around the large table and all the baskets, boxes and chairs.

Berta repeatedly manages to graze one of the children with the ladle, but never quite manages to hit them.

BERTA (CONT'D)  
Get back here! Wait till I get my  
hands on you.

She darts around the table, suddenly catching Gerti. She strikes her on the backside with the ladle as Gerti howls with laughter. Berta laughs too, releasing Gerti and chasing the remaining three culprits. Laughing and screaming, they disperse in all directions.

T2

Alma suddenly finds herself alone in one of the hallways. Still laughing, she dashes to the next corner, spotting Big Berta flash past again as she chases Lia through a doorway. Alma suddenly stops and pauses as she notices something out of the corner of her eye.

CUT TO:

34 INT. HOUSE / CORRIDOR / PARLOR - EVENING

34

In the 1910s

Dark and blurred at the edges is what Alma can see through the crack of the half open door. She watches her mother Emma taking out a framed photograph from a chest, then gazing at it before placing it reverently on the dresser, where she has already placed numerous other framed pictures from the chest.

Emma takes a step back, admiring the photos she's placed there. Suddenly, something rushes through her body like a wave. She jerks forward as if she were about to retch. She quickly brings her hand to her mouth, biting the taut skin between her thumb and index finger.

Sudden darkness, as if a memory suddenly broke off.

BLACK.

Soft whimpering is audible again.

CUT TO:

35 INT. HOUSE / HALLWAY - EVENING

35

In the 1910s

Suddenly, Alma's standing in the hallway of the upper floor, hearing the soft whimpering from behind a closed door. Cautiously, she heads down the hallway. As she passes Fritz' room, she's surprised to find that the door is ajar. Fritz lies in his bed, his stump propped up and his eyes closed. He whimpers almost imperceptibly. Trudi lifts his arm, washing his armpits. Fritz opens his eyes. His gaze meets Alma's as she watches him from the doorway. Trudi follows Fritz' gaze, spotting Alma. Trudi quickly uses her foot to push the door closed in Alma's face.

CUT TO:

36 INT. HOUSE / GIRLS' ROOM - DAY

36

In the 1910s

Alma stares at a black dress, laid out on the bed in front of her. Next to it sits her doll in a sailor costume. In the background, Lia and Gerti are already putting on their black Sunday dresses. Lia's breasts are already starting to develop, and her sister Gerti glances at them furtively before looking down at herself.

Lia looks at Alma, nodding to the dress on the bed.

LIA

Come on, hurry up.

Alma stares incredulously at the black dress with the red silk bow at the waist.

ALMA

For me?

LIA

(Low German dialect)

Mom picked it out for you. Come on, put it on.

Alma touches the black dress and its red silk bow reverently.

A smile flits across her face as she's filled with a surreal sense of happiness. She has never called anything so beautiful her own.



37

INT. HOUSE / HALLWAY / PARLOR - EVENING

37

In the 1910s

T1

POV Alma: She looks down, admiring the new black dress on herself, swaying slightly and watching how it flows. She looks at her hands, playing with the red silk bow, then smoothing the shiny fabric. The image flashes for mere fractions of a second - "tick, tick, tick" - it happens so quickly, that we can't be sure if we've actually seen these brief blips or if they're hidden "between the images".

T2

The same POV: A young girl's hands on her dress, but the girl runs and skips across the floorboards.

T3

The same POV on the dress again: This time the girl sits on something padded, covered in velvet fabric. Her finger on the dress twitches slightly.

T4

The same scene again: The dress, hands hanging limply at her sides, lifeless legs being dragged across the hallway.

T1

Finally back to Alma's POV: a scrutinizing, subjective gaze panning away from the silk bow across the tile floor with the lily pattern, lingering on one tile that's unevenly plastered. The gaze wanders on, noticing many legs in black shoes standing in a line ahead of her. Occasionally, people's breaths are audible, the sound of someone quietly clearing their throat. From this POV, we hear dialogue without seeing the speakers' faces.

ALMA (O.S.)  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
What do we do now?

LIA (O.S.)  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
Just do as the others do.

Between the shoulders of the people in line, we see, half obscured, the open parlor door.

The dresser leans against the wall. On it are the numerous framed photographs that their mother Emma had placed there.

On each end, a candle burns.

Above the dresser, a plain wooden cross hangs on the wall.

Alma sees that her great grandmother **FRIEDA (89)**, an old woman dressed in black from head to toe, is next in line. She enters the parlor. Standing before the dresser, she bows slightly, murmuring quietly, and makes the sign of the cross. Lifting her veil, she brings the tips of her index and middle fingers to her mouth and kisses them. Then, walking alongside the dresser, she touches the photographs one by one with her fingertips, crossing herself repeatedly. Someone's back thrusts into Alma's field of vision, blocking her view.

T5

Suddenly, an external POV: Alma standing in line on tiptoes, trying to peer past the crowd into the parlor. Alma pauses abruptly, as if she senses this gaze on her. She looks in the direction of the camera, eyes searching, until they come to rest. She stares directly at the camera.

FADE TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

38

INT. HOUSE / HALLWAY / PARLOR - EVENING/NIGHT

38

In the 1910s

POV Alma: She enters the parlor, glancing to her left, where a long table is set. Behind it, several of her relatives are already standing with their heads bowed.

Alma approaches the dresser. She sees that the frames display *post mortem photographs*\* of her relatives.

Feeling something between fascination and horror, she takes in the photographs of her ancestors on the dresser as she walks past.

She has almost reached the end when she abruptly stops dead in her tracks. She stares at the photograph that also transfixed her mother for so long while she was putting it up.

It's a black and white photograph of a girl, around seven years old, wearing a dress. She sits on a ribbed velvet sofa, eyes closed and leaning slightly to the side, as if she were asleep. Her legs are slightly bent to the side, and her foot is strangely turned inwards. Next to the girl's right hand, resting by her side on the sofa, sits a doll. Alma is mesmerized by the picture, inevitably fingering the red bow on her new black dress. It's the same dress that the dead girl in the photograph is wearing. She looks at the doll sitting next to the girl on the sofa. It's wearing a sailor suit. It's Alma's doll.

CUT TO BLACK.

*(\*Post-mortem photography refers to the act of taking pictures of the deceased, and the resulting photographs. Compared to paintings, photographs were less expensive and were, at the time, of superior quality, making it possible to preserve the memory of the deceased before decomposition set in. Since photography was still not commonplace, post-mortem photographs were often the only depictions of the entire family together.)*

39 INT. HOUSE / PARLOR - EVENING

39

In the 1910s

Stunned, Alma stands behind her chair. The table is almost completely occupied, and everyone stands behind their chairs, heads bowed.

The parlor is filled to the brim. Now Alma's 17-year-old brother Fritz enters the room, leaning on his one leg and a pair of crutches.

Alma only notices these details from the corner of her eye. Her attention keeps returning to the photograph on the dresser. She's briefly distracted when Fritz, touching the photographs, drops his crutches to the floor and awkwardly tries to retrieve them with his one leg. Her sisters' faces, who can barely conceal their laughter, appear unreal and unfamiliar to her. It's as if she has suddenly forgotten how to recognize when something is funny.

CUT TO:

Everyone simultaneously pulls back their chairs. Darkness fills the screen.

CUT TO:

Simultaneously, everyone folds their hands in prayer.

CUT TO BLACK.

Darkness fills the screen. Through the darkness, noises and prayers can be heard.

ALL

(Low German dialect, O.S.)

Holy, eternal God. We think today  
of those whom you have called from  
our midst, and in doing so we  
remember that we too will perish.

CUT TO:

They eat in total silence. Everyone wordlessly spoons the soup. Mother Emma retches between mouthfuls.

Her stomach is bothering her. The noise penetrates the silence, although everyone pretends not to hear it. She can barely eat, but forces herself to swallow every mouthful anyway. Alma glances over to her mother, noticing the faint bite mark on her hand. Her mother's stomach growls again, and Emma attempts to suppress a small gag. Hedda looks at her with concern. The mother notices Hedda's gaze and winks at her. The clattering of cutlery slowly subsides. The camera pans across the faces of the diners. Meanwhile, dialogue continues as voice-over.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 (Low German dialect)  
 One wink means I love you. Two  
 winks means I love you very much.  
 We keep score. Hedda is usually  
 ahead, but that's just because  
 she's our little cripple.

The camera lingers on Hedda, sitting in her wheelchair and spooning soup into her mouth.

CUT TO:

A fly is crawling over the dishes. It hops onto the neighboring plate. Alma stares at the fly, following it with her eyes, as it finally flies against the closed window pane.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 (Low German dialect)  
 Did Erwin notice that the fly had  
 crawled into his mouth?

Alma's voice-over accompanies the next series of fragmented images, showing moments and excerpts of the rest of the evening.

CUT TO:

40 INT. HOUSE / PARLOR - NIGHT

40

In the 1910s

Consecutive scene with a small time jump - it's now later in the evening. Someone is playing the accordion. Alma continues to scan the people in the parlor, commenting as though she were remembering.

People are drinking homemade schnapps. The mood is cheerful. Everyone is singing and laughing. The men smoke pipes. Our gaze lingers on Frieda, the toothless great grandmother who by now is a mere skin and bones, sitting on the sofa and singing along in high spirits.

ALMA (V.O. CONT'D)  
 (Low German dialect)  
 ... My great grandmother always  
 gets terribly upset when Dad kills  
 a fly... Imagine you were a fly,  
 with only a day to live, and  
 somebody comes along and swats you  
 dead.

Great Grandmother Frieda secretly gestures to the children to pour her some schnapps without mother Emma noticing, as she thinks that Frieda has already drunk quite enough.

Fritz sits silently by himself, also drinking schnapps. The children sit under the table, gawking at Fritz' stump with fascination.

There's talk of war.

Some tell humorous anecdotes about the deceased.

A few children are playing "Trade ten Russians for a Frenchman".

Alma sits in the middle, at the side of her great grandmother Frieda, ..and observes herself from the outside, as if she had detached herself from her own body. She takes her great grandmother Frieda's hand, pinching her thin, parchment like skin and pulling it upwards. The skin stays up without returning to its original position. Frieda does the same to Alma's hand. The skin bounces right back.

CUT TO:

The evening is winding down, and only a few people remain.

A farmhand has fallen asleep in the corner, and a child under the table.

Great Grandmother Frieda is drunk, talking excitedly and crying intermittently, like a little girl. Her grandson, Alma's **Father MAX (45)** sits nearby, on a chair at the table. He listens to her without looking while smoking his pipe. Alma sits beside her great grandmother on the sofa and watches her hands, which often reach up towards the heavens as though trying to conjure something.

Frieda sits still, almost motionless in her seat. Only her thoughts seem to be racing. Her grandson Max keeps a steady gaze on her. Frieda holds her empty glass in her hand, running her finger up and down it. It's the only movement she's making, and she seems to be doing it unconsciously, completely lost in thought. Something overshadows her, darkening her expression. She sits so perfectly still, that she almost looks like one of the post-mortem photographs.

MAX  
(Low German dialect)  
Do you think by next year, you'll  
be up on that dresser, too?

Max nods towards the dresser holding the photographs of the deceased. Frieda isn't quite sure how to respond.

FRIEDA  
(Low German dialect,  
numbly)  
Um, well...

Max pours himself another glass of schnapps.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)  
(Low German dialect)  
Wonder what it'll be like...?

MAX  
(Low German dialect)  
No need to be afraid of death.

FRIEDA  
(Low German dialect)  
I'm not afraid!

Beat.

She then mutters to herself meekly.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)  
But I don't want to go into that  
box. Nobody knows if I'll notice  
what you decide to do with me.  
Nobody can say if you truly don't  
notice anything anymore.  
(beat)  
I watched them all die. I outlived  
every single one of them, including  
your mother... my Fanni.

MAX  
(Low German dialect)  
I know, I know...

Beat. Then:

FRIEDA  
(Low German dialect)  
You won't get me into a coffin.  
I'll never, ever go into a box like  
that. I'd rather be laid to rest  
outside. On the mountain.

Max can't help but smirk.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)

(Low German dialect)

Let the vultures eat me. I don't mind. At least you're free in the open air, instead of six feet under.

MAX

(Low German dialect)

Great, well then we'll just carry you up the meadow and put you under the apple tree, when you're no longer with us.

FRIEDA

(Low German dialect)

Yes, please.

Frieda downs her schnapps.

MAX

(Low German dialect)

Okay. We'll see if the pastor will go along with it. If everyone did that we'd bring back the plague in no time.

Frieda looks at the photographs, feeling queasy. Tears seem to well in her eyes.

FRIEDA

That old witch, she's lurking up there, just waiting for me to die too.

(pointing upwards)

She's circling up there.

Max laughs in amusement.

MAX

(Low German dialect,  
declaratory)

YOUR MOTHER.

Frieda nods softly.

MAX (CONT'D)

You don't have to worry about that. It's so vast up there. It would be the devil's doing if you were to meet her there again...

FRIEDA

(Low German dialect)

Ya think?

Max nods and pours his grandmother yet another schnapps.

MAX  
(Low German dialect)  
Of course!

FRIEDA  
(Low German dialect)  
Oh, my boy...

Frieda doesn't quite believe Max. Both down their schnapps.  
After a while the charade starts once more.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)  
(whispering, low German  
dialect)  
But I won't go into that box!

Alma furtively sticks her finger into Frieda's glass, which  
she has placed by her side again, swiping the last drop of  
schnapps from the bottom and sticking it in her mouth.

41 INT./EXT. HOUSE / HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE PARLOR - NIGHT 41

In the 1910s

T1

The All Souls festivities proceedings are over. The last  
guests stagger out of the parlor. Through the open double  
doors, Alma sees the farmhands drunkenly cross the yard to  
the stable, where they sleep. One of the farmhands chases the  
maid, Big Berta, who squeals and laughs as she strikes his  
backside with a carpet beater.

T2

As he passes her, one of the drunken farmhands playfully  
gropes Ugly Trudi, who turns to stone.

Alma can see Ugly Trudi standing there, as though she wished  
she could make herself invisible. As if she had just plopped  
into this world by mistake.

Lia streaks across the frame, and Alma sees how Lia also  
observed the moment with Trudi.

42 INT. HOUSE / STAIRWELL - NIGHT 42

In the 1910s

Nighttime, the house is silent. Everyone is asleep. Alma  
follows her older sisters Lia and Gerti. Barefoot in their  
nightgowns, they tiptoe through the house. Lia is carrying  
Little Cripple Hedda on her back.



Lia pauses on the stairs, signalling to her sisters with a nod to avoid the creaky step. One by one, their bare feet step over it.

CUT TO:

43

INT. HOUSE / PARLOR - NIGHT

43

In the 1910s

CLOSE UP: The camera pans across the photograph: the dead girl with the dolls and her turned in legs on the velvet sofa. Behind her is a blurred, ghost-like shadowy figure. It's holding the girl by the shoulders. The sombre figure is out of focus, but we can tell from the lace veil that it's likely Alma's mother who's tightly clutching the dead child from behind. Soft whispers, the voices of Alma, Lia, Gerti and Hedda, accompany the scene.

ALMA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
I think she's just sleeping. She  
doesn't look dead at all.

Gerti approaches the photograph, giving it a close look.

GERTI  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
True.

Beat.

GERTI (CONT'D)  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
Perhaps they just assumed she was  
dead, and they buried her alive by  
mistake.

HEDDA  
(Low German dialect,  
snickering quietly)  
Yeah, she stole sugar beets from  
the pantry and now she's just  
eating them without a care in the  
world.

Gerti and Lia notice Alma's anxious face. Gerti attempts to stifle her laughter. Lia places a finger to her lips.

LIA  
Shhh.

The girls stand in their white nightgowns in front of the photographs of the deceased, candles burning on the dresser.

In the dwindling light, they look like barefoot phantoms.  
Only Little Cripple Hedda is seated, as she cannot stand.

GERTI  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
So how old was she when she died?

LIA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
Seven.

ALMA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
Why did she die so young?

LIA  
(whispering)  
How am I supposed to know? She was  
a sickly child and one day she just  
didn't wake up again.

Alma stares at the photo, fiddling with her big sister's  
nightgown and whispering.

ALMA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
Lia, what does it say there?

Alma points to the cross with the date and photo labelled  
with the name.

LIA  
(whispering)  
Alma.

ALMA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
Liar.

LIA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
It's true, it says Alma.

ALMA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
But *I'm* Alma.

GERTI  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
(MORE)

GERTI (CONT'D)  
 Maybe her spirit has passed into  
 you.

HEDDA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 whispering)  
 Yeah, maybe you're not actually  
 you, but her.

Gerti and Hedda see Alma's horrified face. They stifle their  
 laughter.

CUT TO:

44 INT. HOUSE / GIRLS' ROOM - NIGHT

44

In the 1910s

Alma lies on her back in bed. In the darkness, she sees the  
 black dress neatly hung on the wire hanger on a hook. She  
 lets her gaze wander to the foot of the bed where the doll in  
 the sailor suit sits, the one which had already belonged to  
 her predecessor. She stares at it.

Alma climbs out of bed and crawls under the covers with Lia.  
 Lia is half asleep, but Alma's afraid. She snuggles up to her  
 sister, whispering.

ALMA  
 (whispering)  
 Lia?

Lia grumbles wearily without answering. Alma turns on her  
 side. She stares at the velvet sofa, placed against the  
 opposite wall. It's the same sofa that the original Alma sat  
 on in her post-mortem photograph. Alma gazes at it  
 unwaveringly, then after a while:

ALMA (V.O.)  
 (whispering)  
 Lia?

LIA (V.O.)  
 Hm.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 (whispering, Low German  
 dialect)  
 What do you mean, she just didn't  
 wake up again?

Annoyed, Lia turns on her other side.

LIA  
 (Low German dialect)  
 Go to sleep, Alma.

Alma stares at the sofa. She closes her eyes briefly, then immediately opens them again. She doesn't dare to sleep anymore. After a while:

ALMA (V.O.)  
(whispering, low German  
dialect)  
What happens then, when you're  
dead?

No answer.

ALMA (V.O.)  
(whispering, low German  
dialect)  
Tell me!

LIA (V.O.)  
(Low German dialect,  
grumbling softly)  
Well, nothing.

Alma stares into the darkness. Through the shadows she still sees the velvet sofa. Gradually, the outlines dissolve - the image becomes dark.

45 INT. HOUSE / ROOM - NIGHT

45

In the 2020s

T1

Darkness. A hornet flies against the outer surface of the window pane. The camera glides through the dark room. It takes a while to get accustomed to the darkness.

The sound of breathing is audible, until the outlines of Christa and Hannes appear. They're lying on a mattress on the ground, intertwined, making love. The bodies' outlines merge; it's impossible to distinguish who's who.

The camera floats onward to Lenka's sleeping face, Nelly, lying on her stomach with her mouth agape, fast asleep.

CUT TO:

T2

The darkness makes the image grainy. Nelly sits on her mattress, sobbing, but no sound comes out. The scene is silent. Her face is just a mask of mucus. Christa sits on the edge of the mattress, holding her in her arms, rocking her. Hannes sits behind Nelly, still half asleep, stroking her back soothingly and speaking to her reassuringly.

Lenka leans against the wall, legs bent, sitting on her mattress in her nightgown. Strands of hair fall into her face as she distraughtly observes the other three.

Suddenly the sound returns. Nelly emits a bloodcurdling scream. She's sobbing so hard that she can barely breathe.

Hannes keeps speaking to her calmly as he strokes her back.

HANNES

It's not real. It was just a dream.

CUT TO:

T3

In the darkness, Hannes goes backwards down the hallway, unwinding cable from a cable reel.

CUT TO:

T4

Only hissing is audible. Nelly and Lenka are sitting together on Nelly's mattress. The wall behind them and the floor rush past them in the background. They laugh, their torsos swaying back and forth, occasionally bumping into each other.

Christa runs as fast as she can, pulling the corner of the mattress on which the girls are sitting and hauling them around the room - then over into the other room where Hannes and Christa sleep.

Hannes crosses the frame, walking backwards, still unravelling the cable reel. He places it next to the mattress on the ground, sticking a plug into the socket. A small lamp on the ground lights up. He grabs his shirt, which lies next to the mattress, and drapes it over the lamp as a makeshift lampshade.

Meanwhile, the girls and Christa have slipped under the sheets. They lie side by side, stretching their arms into the air, making small movements with their hands.

Nelly seems to have calmed down again. Playing with the blanket, she hesitantly starts speaking, not daring to look at Christa. Something is troubling her.

NELLY

Mom?

CHRISTA

Yeah?

NELLY  
You know what I find strange?

CHRISTA  
No?

NELLY  
I know exactly how the door handle  
would taste if I licked it right  
now. But I've never actually licked  
it. I know how pretty much anything  
would taste even though I've never  
tried it. Kinda weird, right?

CHRISTA  
(pondering for a moment)  
Makes sense, 'cause as a kid you  
always stuck everything in your  
mouth.

Hannes elaborates.

HANNES  
Yeah, nobody was ever fast enough-  
pop, there it was in your mouth.  
Cigarettes from the ground, dog  
poo.

Lenka laughs; Nelly smiles for a moment. Christa notices  
this, almost relieved.

NELLY  
Ick. Not true.

Nelly's gaze focuses again on the corner of the blanket with  
which she's playing. She becomes serious again, it seems to  
really bother her. She frowns.

NELLY (CONT'D)  
But how could I reach the door  
handle when I was a baby?

She fixes her eyes on the door handle behind Christa, who  
follows her gaze.

CHRISTA (O.S.)  
Okay, time to go to sleep.

POV Nelly: Christa, placing her hand on her face.

46

EXT. FRONT PORCH STEPS / FARMYARD - NIGHT

46

In the 2020s

T1

Christa sits on the steps, drinking wine. In the darkness, the red bricks seem to glow. The crickets chirp. Hannes approaches Christa, grabbing the lighter next to her on the step, and lights a cigarette. Christa leans her head against his stomach, nudging it with her forehead. She opens the fly of his pants, reaching in and taking out his penis, then nudges the flaccid penis with her forehead.

CHRISTA  
(blithely)  
Warm.

Hannes removes a twig that was tangled in Christa's hair. Christa yawns.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
When will the waste containers arrive?

HANNES  
Ah shit, I didn't call him back.

CHRISTA  
Might be better to order two small ones to avoid this huge mess again.

Hannes nods.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
Right up to the wall of the house, under the window, you know? Then Lenka and I can dump the rubble directly into it.

Hannes reaches for the wine, which is standing on the step. Christa freezes when she sees a girl standing in the darkness of the doorway. Upon second glance we realize that it's Kaya, the girl with the paddle board from the river.

Hannes turns his head, following Christa's gaze. Kaya is already gone. Only her receding footsteps are audible.

HANNES  
Who was that?

CHRISTA  
I think she's the kid who lives back there, the daughter... what's their name... ah... well, the one whose mother just died.

T2

The camera leaves Christa and Hannes, floating through the window towards the sleeping girls. It touches Lenka's face first, then Nelly's. A fly crawls over Nelly's cheek.

CUT TO:

47 INT. HOUSE / GIRLS' ROOM / FRITZ' ROOM - NIGHT

47

In the 1940s

Erika quietly sneaks out of her room, scuttling through the house towards her uncle Fritz' room. Slowly, she opens the door.

CUT TO:

48 INT. HOUSE / FRITZ' ROOM / ERIKA AND IRM'S ROOM - NIGHT

48

In the 1940s

T1

Erika stands before Fritz, who's lying in his bed, asleep. Fritz' face looks soft, peaceful. Erika's eyes wander over his delicate features. The bedsheet has slipped off him, the white night shirt revealing half his body. Erika watches Fritz for a few moments, standing in the silence of the room, letting her gaze wander over his body. Her eyes linger on his stump, finally resting on his half-covered genitals.

Then, starting to shiver, she turns to leave. A floorboard creaks beneath her and she freezes in her tracks, staring at her sleeping uncle. He continues to breathe steadily.

Erika has reached the door now. Just before leaving the bedroom completely, she takes another brief look around. Fritz is staring at her, his eyes piercing straight through the darkness. They lock eyes for a moment, then she shuts the door behind her as quickly as she can.

T2

Startled, Erika hurries back along the hallway and into her bedroom, slipping back under her shared blanket. A pair of hands, belonging to **IRM (16)** is visible. Erika snuggles under the blanket, shivering.

ERIKA

Warm.

IRM

(half asleep)

What's up?

ERIKA

Nothing. Go back to sleep.



IRM

Did you go to see Uncle Fritz  
again?

Erika doesn't answer. She turns around and shuts her eyes. Irm looks at her sister's neck. Her hair as it falls onto the sheet. Suddenly, there is a soft crackling sound, a rustling begins, and Angelika's voice is audible over the image.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

Memories are weird like that.  
Mom knows things that she shouldn't  
remember, because she wasn't  
actually there when they happened.  
For example, she remembers how  
Erika always stole Uncle Fritz'  
crutches, to see if it was actually  
possible to walk with just one leg.  
And she remembers how Erika drowned  
in the river. But if you ask her  
where she herself was when these  
things happened, she doesn't  
remember.

Irm's gaze is drawn to Erika's neck. The small hairs stand  
on end from her skin like antennae.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

Maybe because we always only see  
others from the outside, and never  
ourselves.

49

INT. FARMYARD / PARLOR - DAY

49

In the 1980s

The board is white. A small black cross marks center left,  
while a black dot marks center right.

ANGELIKA (O.S.)

Well, see? Now close your right  
eye and focus on the point  
directly in front of you with  
your left.

IRM (O.S.)

(laughing girlishly)  
Like this?

ANGELIKA (O.S.)

Yeah, and now move towards it  
slowly. If the cross hits your  
blind spot, you won't be able to  
see it anymore.

The shot comes closer. Suddenly, the cross is nowhere to be seen. It has simply vanished.

IRM (O.S.)  
So, it worked!

Irm bursts out laughing.

IRM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Well, look at that!

Irm's head appears in the frame, bumping the tip of her nose against the board on which the cross is painted.

UWE  
Yeah, the optician said it's  
literally called a "blind spot".

The board is placed on the table. Angelika appears behind it, next to her uncle Uwe, sitting opposite Irm at the table. In the background, Rainer sits in an armchair in the corner of the room, throwing his rubber ball into the air and catching it repeatedly.

IRM  
It's a phenomenon.  
(to Angelika)  
But now show the glasses that you  
picked out.

Angelika reluctantly puts on her new glasses. Irm admires her daughter.

IRM (CONT'D)  
Chic!

Angelika shrugs, unimpressed. Uncle Uwe takes another slice of cake from the middle of the table and keeps talking with his mouth full, while Angelika tries to catch her reflection in the back of the cake fork. In the background, her father Albat is visible through the window, repairing the water pump in the yard.

UWE  
It's quite a thing, if you think  
about it, that the world is  
actually upside down.

Irm looks at him skeptically.

UWE (CONT'D)  
It's true! The optician said so.  
The brain has to mirror  
everything first, before it  
reaches our brain right way  
round...

He taps his head, laughing at the thought.

UWE (CONT'D)

Does it work like that for everyone?...

RAINER

Well, I would say, for everyone except you.

UWE

Youhooooo...

Uwe raises his arm menacingly, pretending to hit Rainer. He grabs Rainer's rubber ball, which Rainer has just thrown into the air, and takes it from him. Rainer gets up. He locks his arms around his father, trying to pry open his hand to retrieve the ball. However, Uwe is stronger. Irm is still watching Angelika, who's staring at her glasses in the reflection of the silver coffee pot, a sour expression on her face.

IRM

Come on now, don't make that face... There are worse things. Did you ever thank Uncle Uwe for driving you into town?

Uwe pats Angelika's bare thigh, which sticks out from under her short skirt.

UWE

No thanks needed. Glad to do it.

Rainer stares at his father Uwe's hand. Suddenly, a knock on the window from outside. Uwe and Angelika both wince in fright. In the yard stands Angelika's father Albat, drumming on the window and grinning. He calls out:

ALBAT

Didya get the glasses? Lemme see.

Angelika turns towards her father, pushing the glasses up on her nose. Albat gives her a thumbs up in approval.

50

EXT. HAVEL RIVER BRANCH - DAY

50

In the 1980s

Angelika swims as fast as she can in a cove, a small branch of the Havel.

Rainer swims, doing the crawl, alongside her.

Uwe stands on the Havel beach, cheering her on and keeping her time.

CUT TO:

Rainer climbs out of the water, breathing heavily, and collapses onto the towel in the sand, next to his father Uwe. Angelika is still floating in the water, playing dead.

Uwe smokes, watching Angelika.

UWE

Watch out! Don't go too far out!  
You have to stay within the cove!

Rainer reaches for his wristwatch. He had removed it before swimming and now it's lying next to him on the towel. He uses the silver underside of the watch to reflect the sun, and lets it dance across Angelika's face, a blinding light.

To shield her eyes from the light, Angelika raises her hand and turns her body inwards, away from him. When she attempts to look again, she peeks through her fingers and is immediately blinded once more. She quickly dives into the water head first.

Uwe and Rainer watch the circles on the water, then it's silent. After a moment, when Angelika still hasn't surfaced, Rainer looks worried.

Nothing on the horizon. Angelika doesn't resurface. Rainer cranes his torso, and Uwe also sits up. Nothing.

After a long moment, they both flinch fearfully when they get splashed from behind.

Angelika had swum to the next cove, climbing out of the water unnoticed, and crept up behind the two of them.

She shakes out her wet hair over both of them.

Angelika laughs as she reaches for her new glasses, which are lying on the towel, and she puts them on.

She grabs her towel, wrapping it around her head like a turban, and walks again towards the water. As she passes him, she ruffles Rainer's hair.

ANGELIKA

Scared, huh?

She wades through the water, taking a few steps back and forth. Rainer lowers his eyes, not wanting to stare at her as she stands directly in front of him in a swimsuit.

Uwe openly checks out her body as he talks to Angelika and Rainer about their crawl technique, and the things they need to pay attention to.

The sound of his voice fades into the background, as do the rest of the scene's noises. Angelika's voice is audible in voice-over.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

I often pretended not to notice the way they looked at me, as if I were completely lost in my thoughts. But in reality, it was me who was secretly watching them watching me.

Angelika turns her back on Uwe and Rainer, raising her face to the sun as Uwe chatters incessantly. She closes her eyes.

Sudden silence. Behind her eyelids, pulsating orange with black offshoots. A swelling drone can be heard.

CUT TO:

51 EXT. FIELD - DAY

51

In the 1980s

Angelika's bare feet run through the harvested stubble field. As she's competing with Rainer, they both run as fast as they can. Angelika is faster.

Rainer keeps grimacing in pain. Occasionally while running, Angelika glances back over her shoulder at him.

Her hair flows wildly and she laughs exuberantly, eyes sparkling.

CUT TO:

52 EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

52

In the 1980s

They sit on the edge of the field and laugh as they gaze at their feet. Their feet are cut to ribbons. Angelika and Rainer compare who has more wounds from the field's hard bristles.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

53

In the 1980s

POV Angelika: Her bare feet, walking down the sandy dirt road. A few meters behind her limps Rainer, barefoot. Walking in the sand hurts his injured feet. Angelika looks over her shoulder at him.

ANGELIKA  
Gonna start to cry?

Rainer grits his teeth, trying not to let it show, but the moment Angelika averts her gaze his face contorts with pain.

Angelika smiles, looking again at her own bare feet as they walk down the dirt road.

54 INT. HOUSE / RAINER AND ANGELIKA'S ROOM - NIGHT

54

In the 1980s

It's the middle of the night, and the room is dark. Rainer lies on his back in bed, listening closely to the darkness. Through the open bedroom door, he can see Angelika's bed in the adjoining room. It's empty. Angelika isn't at home. Rainer tosses his rubber ball into the air above him and catches it again. After a while, Rainer sees beams of car light dancing across his ceiling. He hears a car driving into the yard, the engine being turned off, the car doors opening and then closing. Angelika and Uwe's drunk voices are barely audible. Footsteps across the yard. The front door opens, then closes with a click.

Rainer squeezes his rubber ball.

A moment later, Angelika's bedroom door opens. Quietly, Angelika slips tipsily into the room, closing the door behind her. She notices that on the other end of her bedroom, the door to Rainer's room is open a crack. She crosses the room, shutting the door to Rainer's room, then heads towards her bed, stripping down to her underwear and letting her clothes simply drop to the floor. In the middle of the room, she wriggles out of her last piece of clothing, letting that too fall to the floor, then turns around before recoiling in shock.

Rainer is sitting in an armchair in the corner of the room, staring at her through the darkness. For a moment, Angelika remains immobile with shock, before instinctively covering her breasts with her hands. Then she realizes that it's Rainer, and lets her arms drop to her sides.

ANGELIKA  
Wacko.

She crawls into her bed, naked save her underwear. Rainer stands up, then sits down on the edge of the bed, watching her.

RAINER  
Were you in Glöwisch?

ANGELIKA  
Uh-huh.

RAINER  
And was it good?

ANGELIKA  
Uh-huh.

Angelika routinely lifts the bedsheet that's covering her.  
Rainer lies on his back next to her.

RAINER  
How did you get home?

Angelika mumbles drowsily.

ANGELIKA  
Hitchhiked.

RAINER  
And who picked you up?

Angelika doesn't answer immediately. A moment passes.

ANGELIKA  
Your dad.

RAINER  
Was he at the disco too, or what?

ANGELIKA  
Nope.

RAINER  
But?

ANGELIKA  
Came driving by, when I left.

Angelika turns towards Rainer, lies down in his arms, burying her nose in his neck. Rainer feels her body on his. Her breasts on his chest. He turns his head towards her, kissing her clumsily on the mouth. Angelika pulls her head back, watching him amusedly.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)  
Rainer, you're my cousin.

With that one sentence, he's suddenly above Angelika, and shoots her a look.

RAINER  
The fact that my dad is your uncle  
doesn't bother you though, right?

Angelika freezes.

RAINER (CONT'D)  
You think nobody noticed? Everybody  
knows that you let him screw you.

Angelika remains lying down as if she were paralyzed, without moving a millimeter. The mattress wobbles briefly as Rainer gets to his feet and goes over to his room. Shortly thereafter, the sound of his rubber ball can be heard, hitting the ceiling repeatedly as he throws it.

The camera lingers on Angelika, lying motionless in bed. The sound of the bouncing rubber ball intensifies, becoming a clacking, crescendoing thump.

55

EXT. FIELD BEHIND THE FARM - DAY

55

In the 1980s

T1

Angelika's father Albat stands with his daughter on the field. The combine harvester is running in the background. A loud hum. He stands in front of her, shouting to make himself heard.

ALBAT

And if you find one, give me a sign. Like this.

Her father Albat raises a flag in demonstration and waves, arm outstretched.

ALBAT (CONT'D)

You've gotta really stretch your arm. Or I won't see you. Then I'll know that I can't drive in that lane.

CUT TO:

T2

Angelika roams the field searchingly, then spots a fawn in the tall grass. She claps her hands in an attempt to scare it away, but it remains frozen in fear. The combine harvester trundles towards her. There's a sudden suction, and she dives towards the fawn. It keeps sitting there, the combine harvester getting ever closer, appearing not to see it. She spreads her arms out over the fawn. The clamor of the combine harvester grows louder and louder.

BLACK.

CUT TO:

T3

Angelika roams the field searchingly. The sound of the combine harvester in the distance. Her gaze lingers on a hollow in the tall grass, and she approaches it. The patch of grass is flattened, but the space is empty.



The fawn has fled. She waves to her father, who is driving the combine harvester some distance away, signalling to him with both arms waving in the air. The coast is clear for him to drive. The combine harvester drives towards Angelika.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)  
We always say that it's your  
actions that count. You are what  
you do.

Angelika steps aside, watching the combine harvester drive over the patch of flattened grass.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)  
I don't believe that's true.  
I actually believe that you are the  
place in which you are, as you do  
something.

56

EXT. FIELD BEHIND THE FARMYARD - DAY

56

In the 1980s

It's incredibly loud, the sound of humming and cracking. Angelika rides along with her father on the big combine harvester. Albat has to yell to be heard over the noise.

ALBAT  
(Low German dialect,  
shouting)  
Do you see now, how it's impossible  
to spot them from here?!

He glances briefly at Angelika. She looks straight ahead on this bumpy ride.

ALBAT (CONT'D)  
(Low German dialect,  
shouting)  
All you can do is look for them  
beforehand. Sometimes you still  
catch a few.  
(shrugs)  
Can't help it if they don't run  
away.

Angelika stares at the dirt between her legs, which she has propped up on the dashboard in front of her. Then she gazes out. POV Angelika: The field bumping past her. The machine din grows quieter.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)  
When I spent time with a friend of  
mine, it didn't take long until  
everyone said that I spoke just  
like her.  
(MORE)

ANGELIKA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Even if there were some things I didn't like, somehow I still had to adopt them: the high-pitched laugh, the tone of voice. I didn't do it on purpose, my body somehow did it on its own.

In the evening, Dad would sometimes decide that enough was enough, that I should go back to being myself. And I did try, but somehow my body wasn't able to on its own.

Trying to remember how the real me spoke made my head spin. I kept repeating my own name, over and over again, until it sounded completely alien to me. Then I imagined seeing myself through my dad's eyes, and I played the role of that version of myself. The version that he probably has in mind, when he says that I should be myself again.

The camera pans in a circle as if Angelika were imagining the scenario she has just described. As if she were immersing herself in her father's POV. Barely perceptible, the hum of the combine harvester in the background.

Angelika sits in the passenger seat of the combine harvester. She looks at her father, directly at the camera, smiling at him/us, the wind blowing strands of hair into her face. Her eyes sparkle as she tilts her head backwards, laughing sweetly. The shimmering light blinds Angelika. Her voice-over.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

How long can someone feign happiness, before others catch on?

57

EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

57

In the 1910s

Shimmering orange light, shining through Alma's eyelids.

The sunlight is so blinding that, time and again, Alma has to squint, closing her eyes briefly.

When she opens them again, we see, lined up next to her in a row, her mother Emma, her father with Little Cripple Hedda in her wheelchair, Lia, a boy (their brother - extra), and at the very end, Fritz.

Alma, standing next to her mother, is holding her little brother by the hand. She squeezes his hand to stop him from fidgeting.

In front of them, an OFFICER (53) paces up and down, scrutinizing everyone intently. Close behind him stands a MILITARY DOCTOR (37).

The officer eyes Fritz, standing before him on his crutches, from head to toe. The military doctor bends down to examine Fritz' stump.

Fritz stares straight ahead, his face impassive, although Alma notices a throbbing vein on his temple.

With excruciating slowness, the officer scrutinizes the father and mother.

Alma stands close by her mother Emma's side, therefore noticing when Emma starts to tremble.

Mother Emma grabs Alma's hand, pulling her close, as if she needed to lean on her for support. Alma can feel her mother's legs shaking so violently under her skirt, that she imagines that Emma will fall to the ground any second. But her mother remains standing, meeting the officer's eye, her torso calm.

The officer speaks to the military doctor, who stands to his left, without taking his eyes off Emma and Max. He taps on the list his subordinate is holding in his hands, motioning for him to write:

OFFICER  
Work accident.

The officer turns on his heel. He and the military doctor mount their horses and ride off through the gateway of the yard.

Alma notices her mother's quick glance across the farmyard, where the usual farm hustle and bustle has briefly stopped. The maids and farmhands who aren't on the field stare over at them.

Emma turns away, hurrying towards the house. Suddenly, her legs shake so violently that she has to prop herself up. She leans on Alma's shoulder. The father looks at the mother, who waves him away, gesturing for them to go ahead. Go! She also keeps walking, then suddenly collapses to the ground. Horrified, she tries to scabble to her feet, unsuccessfully.

The workers pause, watching as the entire family runs to their mother: Gerti and Lia as well as their father Max, even the little brother, in order to help her up.

Only Fritz stands motionless, with his crutches and his stump, watching his mother lying on the ground, with satisfaction, or even a little hatred.

CUT TO BLACK.

58 INT. HOUSE / PARLOR - DAY

58

In the 1910s

T1

BLACK.

Through the darkness we hear Alma's voice.

ALMA (V.O.)

Work accident, work accident,  
work accident, work accident...  
Just because they're using the  
same word, how do people know if  
they're actually talking about  
the same thing?  
For example, that work accident  
means work accident, river means  
river and pitchfork means  
pitchfork? Pretty strange how  
everyone's agreed on that. I've  
often wondered if there are any  
people who secretly belong to  
hostile camps. Those who call a  
river a pitchfork, and a  
pitchfork a river.

T2

From the darkness, a searching gaze appears once more. Alma stands behind the half-open door, holding the little boy (extra) by the hand. They peer through the crack in the door, past the hinges.

Big Berta crosses the frame, revealing mother Emma, sitting on a chair, her bent arm resting on the table. Exhausted, she holds her face, concealing her face and eyes. Emma is surrounded by father Max, Big Berta, and Trudi. They all watch as the DOCTOR (63), who's kneeling at her feet, carefully lifts her skirt and taps below her kneecap with a tiny silver hammer.

He instructs Emma to try to stand. She can't as her legs no longer obey her. Father Max and Big Berta haul her up, and she holds onto them tightly. On the doctor's order she tries to take a step, and they both let go of her. Emma falls with a crash to the floor.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 (Low German dialect)  
 Suddenly Mom couldn't walk anymore,  
 despite being completely healthy.  
 The doctor also couldn't say why.

The mother tries and tries to stand and take a step. Over and over she falls. Emma begins to laugh desperately, hardly able to believe it herself. Big Berta eventually hoists the mother back onto the chair. For a moment, the mother is no longer visible, only Big Berta's face.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 I once asked Big Berta if she still remembered the first Alma. She was a cheerful girl who laughed a lot. The doctor prescribed bed rest for my mother when she was no longer able to walk. No one was allowed to see her. Except in the evenings, when we knelt at her bedside and prayed to God that she could soon walk again, and that Fritz' phantom pains would stop. I made sure to be especially cheerful, and laugh a lot, like the first Alma. But it didn't help. She didn't give me a single wink.

Alma leaves the doorway, leaving her brother (extra) standing there, still peering through the crack in the door. Alma walks up the stairs through the silent stairwell...

59 INT. HOUSE / GIRLS' ROOM - DAY

59

In the 1910s

...On the top floor, she enters the girls' bedroom.

The room lies silently before her. The flickering light swirls across the wallpaper. She sits on the edge of her bed, glancing at the floorboards sealed with oxblood paint, at her doll in its sailor suit, which has fallen off the bed and is lying on the floor. The room is completely silent. The unusual silence spreads through Alma. Her gaze falls on the black dress with the red bow, hanging on the hook.

Alma removes her work smock, laying it neatly over the chair, and slips into the black dress. Her gaze shifts to the velvet sofa.

60 INT. HOUSE / GIRLS' ROOM - DAY

60

In the 1910s

Alma sits on the velvet sofa. She arranges her doll in its sailor suit next to her, the same way it had looked on the post-mortem photograph. Alma turns her legs a little to the side, and lets her upper body tilt sideways, just as the girl in the photograph had sat.

She inhales deeply, holding her breath and closing her eyes.

After a long while, she exhales again. She opens her eyes and looks at the wooden floor in front of her. Her hand rubs the ribbed sofa fabric back and forth, making the velvet alternately lighter and darker.

Light is reflected on the wall, shimmering and swirling. Alma watches it gradually dwindle, until it slowly disappears.

CUT TO:

61 BEHIND THE EYES 61

Pulsating orange light, flickering black, branching out. Suddenly, black fills the screen.

The scene drifts into an underwater scene. A hand falls into the water, making wave-like movements. A twitching finger.

62 BLACK SCREEN 62

We dive into this blackness. Falling into it. It sounds as if we were suddenly in a vacuum.

We float weightlessly through the blackness.

CUT TO:

63 INT. ANIMATION / HOUSE / 1ST FLOOR ROOM - DAY 63

OMITTED

In the 2020s

64 EXT. BANK OF THE HAVEL RIVER - DAY 64

OMITTED

In the 2020s

64A EXT. HAVEL RIVER BRANCH - DAY 64A

In the 2020s

Nelly's hand in the water. Her finger is twitching.

Her girlish body glides through the water. The golden rays of sun sparkle gently and peacefully underwater. Sand, pebbles and algae dance around her body, her arms, her hands. Her hands make small wave-like movements, like an underwater dance. Then her entire body dives under the surface again.

Lenka's gaze rests on the river, where Nelly dives under and resurfaces, practicing her handstands.

Lenka looks around hesitantly, her gaze falling on the spot on the water where Kaya disappeared last time on her paddle board.

LENKA  
(calling in Nelly's  
direction)  
I'm gonna go check something out.  
Be right back.

NELLY  
But Mom said you shouldn't leave  
me by myself! The tide is too  
strong!

LENKA  
Then just stay where you are,  
where you can still touch the  
ground!

Lenka walks along the Havel embankment, in the direction where she last saw Kaya.

When Lenka arrives at the spot behind the bend, nobody's there. The small cove in front of her is silent, almost desolate. She sees a few old cigarette butts on the ground. Quickly, she turns back.

CUT TO:

When Lenka returns, she inwardly recoils when she sees Kaya in the water with Nelly. Kaya is sitting on her paddleboard, watching Lenka. Lenka hesitantly approaches her. She sees that Kaya has some stones lying on her board. She reluctantly walks to the river bank. Kaya calls out to her.

KAYA  
Do you two live here now?

Lenka looks tense, inwardly debating whether or not she wants to tell this girl anything. Then Nelly already answers.

NELLY  
We'll see. We don't know for sure  
yet.  
(MORE)

NELLY (CONT'D)

For now it's just for the summer.  
Dad doesn't know yet if he can  
handle no more city.

Kaya snorts, a little contemptuously.

KAYA

(to Lenka)

Aren't you hot out there in the  
sun?

NELLY

She never goes swimming. She's  
afraid of the water.

Lenka shoots Nelly a withering glance.

CUT TO:

Lenka steps hesitantly into the water, trying to conceal her fear but looking anxiously into the murky water beneath her. The water reaches her bellybutton by now. Kaya eyes her, sizing her up. Then she reaches for a stone and Lenka freezes.

KAYA

First person to get the stone  
from the bottom wins.

She drops the stone into the water, before diving headfirst after it from her board. Nelly dives in right after her. Lenka stands there uncertainly.

Nelly emerges, stone in hand, holding it up. Kaya resurfaces.

KAYA (CONT'D)

Speedy little kiddo.

Nelly is elated.

NELLY

Again!

LENKA

Come on Nelly, it's time to go.

Lenka turns to leave, stomping out of the water.

NELLY

Not yet!

LENKA

Come on, now!

Lenka keeps walking. Nelly reluctantly starts to follow her. Suddenly, Kaya calls out.



KAYA  
Can I come, too?

Lenka stops in her tracks, turning around and looking at Kaya in disbelief.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

65

In the 2020s

Kaya sits at the table in the yard, shoveling food into her mouth. Lenka and Nelly, as well as Christa and Hannes, can barely take their eyes off her.

CHRISTA  
... I'm so glad you two met. Lenka doesn't know anyone here yet.

KAYA  
That's 'cause there's nobody here.

Christa grins, then cautiously proceeds.

CHRISTA  
How's your dad doing?

KAYA  
Fine! Gotta go now. Can I come for a sleepover sometime?

CHRISTA  
(taken aback)  
Uhh... well... I suppose so, if you'd like to.

Christa glances at Lenka, who couldn't respond quickly enough.

Kaya's face brightens.

KAYA  
Tonight?

Christa laughs.

CHRISTA  
Well, we'd have to talk to your dad first.

Kaya pulls the latest smartphone out of her pants pocket. Lenka is flabbergasted. She doesn't have anything like that.

HANNES  
You already have a smartphone?

Kaya swipes her finger twice across the screen, holding the smartphone to her ear and answering Hannes without looking at him.

KAYA

It was my mom's. I inherited it.

Someone picks up on the other end of the line. Kaya speaks into the phone:

KAYA (CONT'D)

It's me, my new friend's mom wants to ask you something.

Kaya hands her phone to Christa across the dinner table. Steamrolled, Christa takes it and presses it to her ear.

CHRISTA

Hello?

(laughs sheepishly)

Yes, hi, it's Christa here from no.

10. (...) Yes exactly, the Berliner.

(laughs)

So here's the thing, your daughter...

Christa stands up and walks away, talking to Kaya's father. Lenka watches Kaya in fascination, noticing her slight overbite, how she holds her glass and empties it with a single gulp.

66

INT. HOUSE / 1ST FLOOR ROOM - NIGHT

66

In the 2020s

Christa fluffs Lenka's pillow.

Lenka crawls into bed, slipping under the covers. Christa tucks her in tightly. She gives a goodnight kiss to Nelly, lying next to her sister, and then to Lenka.

She stands upright and goes towards the bedroom door, when a hand suddenly grabs her wrist, holding on tightly.

Kaya lies on her own mattress, and looks at Christa with wide eyes. Christa winks at her affectionately. Lenka notices the gesture.

CHRISTA

Sleep well, Kaya.

Christa wants to leave the room, but Kaya keeps hold of her wrist. Christa looks at her, then sits down next to her on the edge of the bed, tucking her in, too.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)

If anything happens, you can always  
come and wake us up, okay? No  
matter what.

Christa gives Kaya a friendly wink. She tries to stand up, but Kaya is still holding her back. Kaya cautiously touches a strand of Christa's hair.

KAYA

Could you maybe sing a lullaby?

Christa looks at her.

CHRISTA

Did your mom always sing to you at  
night?

Kaya nods. Lenka notices Christa's eyes welling with tears. Christa sits on the edge of Kaya's mattress.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)

(clearing her throat  
somewhat awkwardly)

But I'm warning you. I'm not a very  
good singer.

Kaya curls up next to Christa.

KAYA

Doesn't matter.

Christa starts to sing. Lenka and Nelly observe how their mother lovingly brushes a strand of hair out of the stranger's face. Lenka studies Kaya's profile, her overbite, her protruding lower jaw. Now Lenka juts out her own chin to imitate the bold jaw position.

CHRISTA

(singing)

Good evening, good night.  
With pink roses bedight,  
With lilies o'er spread,  
Is baby's wee bed.  
Lay thee down, now and rest,  
may thy slumber be blessed...

A quiet, detached gaze is directed at Alma. The sound makes it seem as if this gaze is still in a vacuum. Through the vacuum, Christa's voice, singing the lullaby, is still faintly audible.

Alma sits on the velvet sofa, her body and her legs slightly tilted to the side. Her feet and hands rest strangely turned inwards. Next to her sits the doll in the sailor suit.

Suddenly, the sound of stifled breathing. As though the observer were in the vacuum, trying to catch their breath.

Alma lies there, motionless. The stifled breathing fades.

After a while, Alma opens her eyes. It only takes her a fraction of a second to realize that she had fallen asleep. She jolts up with a start. The afternoon sun shines low in the room. How long has she been sleeping?

She hurries out of the room and down the stairs, the afternoon sun blinding her as she goes...

CUT TO:

68

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

68

In the 1910s

... She rushes out into the garden. Her siblings have clearly already returned from working in the field, running past her, and Alma follows them. She sees Lia standing facing the hedge, eyes covered, counting backwards aloud.

LIA  
30, 29, 28, 27, 26...

Her siblings, Gerti and her brother (little boy - extra), scatter as they frantically search for a hiding spot. Joining them, Alma calls out to them loudly.

ALMA  
(Low German dialect)  
I'm playing too!

Alma looks around briefly, seeing Gerti, followed by a little boy (extra) disappear around the corner of the house. Alma searches for a hiding place.

LIA  
(counting O.S.)  
15, 14, 13, 12...

Alma races towards the huge apple tree standing near the house, and climbs it, nimble as a squirrel, higher and higher. A branch scratches her arm. From up here, Alma sees her other siblings come back around the corner, still desperately searching for a suitable hiding place, before eventually disappearing into the thick hedge, until they're completely out of sight.

LIA (CONT'D)  
 (in the background)  
 ... 5,4,3,2,1, ready or not, here I  
 come!

Alma watches from above as Lia begins to search. It doesn't occur to Lia to look up as high as Alma's sitting. Alma settles herself proudly on her perch, grinning to herself. From up here, her gaze extends far above the garden, the fields and the edge of the forest beyond.

CUT TO:

Lia finds Gerti and the little boy in the hedge. All of her siblings are standing together.

LIA (CONT'D)  
 (calling)  
 Almaaaa?

Quiet as a mouse, Alma stifles a delighted laugh. It's the best hiding place of all time.

GERTI  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 Almaaaa! Where are you?

Grinning, Alma observes as they run around the garden, unable to find her.

LIA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 Come ouuuut, you win!

Lia looks around. Alma freezes as Lia's gaze hovers on the apple tree. Lia walks over to the tree, standing directly beneath it, and looks Alma in the face.

But instead of calling the others over, she runs to Gerti and whispers something in her ear. Gerti then shouts loudly:

GERTI  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 We're leaving now! Alma's gone!

Lia beckons the other siblings to her, whispering as she walks them towards the house. Alma calls.

ALMA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 I'm hereeee!

The siblings stop in their tracks.

ALMA (CONT'D)  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 Here!

The siblings approach the apple tree and stand under it,  
 gazing up, some of them looking directly at Alma.  
 Nevertheless:

LIA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 Alma? Are you up there somewhere?

Alma stares at them.

ALMA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 Right here!

Her siblings look straight through her.

LIA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling loudly in the  
 garden)  
 Alma, that ain't funny! Come out  
 right now!

ALMA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling)  
 Up here! Here I am! Look up, Lia!

Lia stands there, perplexed.

LIA  
 (Low German dialect, to  
 her other siblings)  
 Did you hear something?

The others shake their heads.

ALMA  
 (Low German dialect,  
 calling in panic now)  
 Here! Up here!

They look up now, squarely at Alma.

GERTI  
(Low German dialect)  
Can you see her?

LIA  
(Low German dialect)  
No, she seems to have vanished into  
thin air.

The siblings go towards the house.

ALMA  
(Low German dialect,  
crying out)  
Here, I really am here!

Alma is about to climb down the tree quickly, but she realizes in horror that she's afraid to slide down to the next branch beneath her. The distance between her and the ground seems infinitely large now. Suddenly, she panics.

ALMA (CONT'D)  
(Low German dialect,  
screaming)  
Here I am! Up here! Lia! Gerti!

Unperturbed, the siblings enter the house, disappearing inside. Alma's dress gets snagged on a branch, and she almost falls. She suddenly starts to sob.

ALMA (CONT'D)  
Help! Help!

ALMA (CONT'D)  
(crying)  
Heeeelp!!

Trembling, she manages to clamber back onto the branch and clings to it.

69 EXT./INT. GARDEN / PARLOR - NIGHT

69

In the 1910s

T1

It's dark. Dazed, Alma sees Trudi come running out of the house. She clings tightly to the branch, trembling, her forehead wet. Trudi spots Alma hanging in the tree, disappears behind the house, returning shortly afterwards with a large ladder.

She approaches the apple tree, followed by Alma's siblings who come out of the house to watch. Trudi leans the ladder against the tree. She climbs up, scooping Alma into her arms. She climbs down the ladder with her and carries her through the garden towards the house.

Alma's eyelids are heavy as lead, as they keep falling closed the image briefly turns black.

T2

The house lights and her sisters' faces appear blurry to Alma as Trudi carries her through the house. Over this, Alma in voice over.

ALMA (V.O.)  
(Low German dialect)  
How can you tell, if you're still  
alive or already dead?

Black.

ALMA (V.O.)  
(Low German dialect)  
I got such a high fever that they  
wanted to call the doctor. But he  
wouldn't have known what to do  
anyway. Then, Trudi put her hand on  
my forehead, just as she always  
does to the cows, to calm them when  
they're calving. She stood at my  
bedside all night long.

For a moment Alma's eyes open, her vision blurred. Behind Trudi she sees her mother, sitting in the rocking chair in the corner. Then, it's dark again.

ALMA (V.O.)  
My mother resisted at first, when  
everyone suggested that Trudi  
should lay her hands on her too,  
but eventually she gave in. I'm  
certain that's the reason she was  
able to walk again so soon.

For a moment, when Alma briefly opens her eyes again, she sees her siblings.

ALMA (V.O. CONT'D)  
Of course, Fritz' situation was  
more complicated. Trudi couldn't  
simply conjure back his leg. Hedda  
was certain that the dogs had eaten  
it long ago. However, she did  
manage to alleviate the phantom  
pains. She lay her hand on Fritz'  
chest. He became calmer and his  
moaning and whimpering much  
quieter.



Whimpering moans. Blurry at first, then slowly coming into focus, a close shot of Trudi. She carries an enamel carafe to a small table, which holds a washing basin. She pours the water into the bowl.

ALMA (V.O.)

(Low German dialect)

Big Berta couldn't have children by nature, which made it easy for the men. But Trudi wasn't so lucky. She had to be made unenticing to men, as my mother always said. Because as a maid, the important thing was that you were quick and industrious. And that you didn't miss work because you had a bun in the oven.

Trudi plunges a washcloth into the the bowl of steaming water, wringing it out. She turns to the side, revealing Fritz, lying in bed. She lifts his arm and washes under his armpits, moving along his body, bathing him expertly.

When she arrives at his crotch with the cloth, she washes him particularly thoroughly. Trudi's body obscures his genitals, but Fritz can be heard panting very quietly.

ALMA (V.O. CONT'D)

I'm not sure what they did exactly, to make Trudi like Big Berta from then on. But right at the beginning, when Trudi first came here, she had to leave again for a few days. It must have happened then.

The image suddenly jitters. Alma stands outside the door, peering through the keyhole, squinting. Her panting tongue touches the iron plating of the door handle.

Her sister Lia pushes her aside, she wants to see, too. Lia takes Alma's place.

Lia's eyes close in on Fritz' face. His head is turned away from Trudi and he gazes out unseeingly. He moans, but suddenly it sounds different than before.

ALMA (CONT'D)

When she returned, suddenly the farmhands started lining up outside her door at night. I don't know if they put a potato sack over her head. In any case, she wasn't any prettier than before. She always looked as though she had just accidentally plopped down to earth, and didn't know what to do with herself.

(MORE)

ALMA (CONT'D)

Trudi once said about Fritz, that he was living his life for nothing. I think that Trudi was living her life for nothing, too. Maybe that's why she always took care of him. So that it wasn't so lonely, living for nothing.

The camera searches for Trudi, focusing on her neck and face, blips of her profile appearing as she dips the cloth back into the water and wrings it out. Suddenly she stops, as if she felt someone's gaze on her. As she's about to turn around, the image jitters suddenly, then disappears. The girls quickly run off.

71 INT. FARMYARD/HOUSE/ROOM/PARLOR/DINING ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY 71

In the 1910s

T1

ALMA (V.O.)

Sometimes I remember things that can't have actually happened.

(pronouncing the next term as if she were trying to thoroughly memorize new vocabulary)

Fritz really did have a **work acc-i-dent**.

Alternately, very old, bony hands and small children's hands reach into a large container on the floor, taking plums out of it. They rip the fruit apart, removing the pit and throwing it with a clang into a smaller bowl standing next to the container. As the young and old hands reach in at the same time, the old hand pinches the skin on the back of the child's hand. Alma laughs in delight.

She and her great grandmother Frieda both sit on stools in the living room, picking through kilos of plums.

Now Alma pinches the back of her great grandmother's hand. The parchment-like skin almost remains stretched. Alma pinches the back of her own hand, the skin bounces back immediately. Alma and Frieda laugh.

A noise attracts both of their attention. Through the lace curtains on the window, Alma sees the usually bustling farmyard, shimmering before her in the midday sun. No farmhands, no maids, not even a chicken sets foot outside at this time of day.

T2

Suddenly they see the source of the scraping noise they just heard.

They see Alma's brother Fritz, who still has both legs at this point, being dragged across the yard by his father Max. Great Grandmother Frieda lowers her gaze, continuing as if nothing had happened.

Alma stands up so she can watch them. Frieda calls her back without lifting her eyes.

FRIEDA  
Alma, let it be!

But Alma sees her father slap Fritz in the face. She has to go check!

She leaves the parlor, racing through the adjoining dining room and dashing across the hallway, finally exiting the house through the double doors.

T3

Her siblings Little Cripple Hedda, Gerti and Lia, as well as the little brother (extra) are already on the front porch, staring.

Fritz is supposed to walk forwards. Go on! His father urges him, but Fritz falls to the ground. Get up! Mother Emma rushes around the corner of the house into the yard. Together, she and Father Max grab hold of Fritz, who resists, lashing out to no avail. His father drags Fritz across the yard into the barn. Mother Emma runs alongside them, and before the barn door closes behind them, her dark eyes scan across the yard. She sees her children on the front porch, staring back at her. She gestures vigorously for them to disappear back into the house.

But the children remain rooted to the spot. The sounds of the father's shouts emit from the barn. Emma quickly disappears inside the barn, closing the door behind her.

Alma and her siblings all flinch when they hear the noises coming from the barn. The clatter of a bucket falling over. Alma breaks away from her siblings, hesitantly crossing the yard towards the barn. Her two-year-old brother starts to cry. The other children whisper at her to come back.

LIA AND SIBLINGS  
(whispering)  
Alma! Alma don't!

But Alma continues towards the barn and peers through the wooden slats of the barn door:

T4

In a flash, the father twists Fritz' arm behind his back, rendering him defenseless. Fritz grimaces in pain, rearing up. Father Max twists his arm so far back that Fritz gasps.

Now his mother grabs Fritz' free arm, pulling him onto a tree stump and holding him tightly as she reaches for the ax that lies ready next to it.

Fritz sees the ax that his mother is wielding in the air. He cries out, begging his parents to let him go. His father, shocked by the sight of his wife with the ax, involuntarily loosens his grip. Fritz immediately wriggles out of Max' grasp with all of his might, and in his distress, he rushes to the ladder that leads to the threshing floor. The only escape. Stumbling, he hurries up the ladder into the hayloft. His mother runs after him, followed by his father Max.

Alma can them in a blur as they appear on the edge of the threshing floor above. There's a brief scuffle, then the mother pushes Fritz, who falls from the threshing floor into the depths below.

Alma recoils in shock. She sees Fritz splayed on the ground, clutching his leg in pain as it lies twisted at a strange angle.

Alma looks up at the threshing floor and sees her mother's face, as she gazes down over the edge. Her face is red with exertion, her cheeks trembling and quivering.

Black fills the screen.

ALMA (V.O.)

Of course, Fritz could no longer go off to war. Although he wanted to so much. From now on, it was said that he had a work accident.

72 INT./EXT. BARN / FARMYARD - DAY

72

In the 1910s

T1

Emerging from the darkness, POV Alma: running down a dark corridor.

The sound of her breathing softly. Something keeps trickling down onto her. Hay.

T2

Amidst the huge haystacks in the barn, the children have built tunnels and passageways. Suddenly, a boy stumbles into the frame from the right, running through the tunnel and swerving around the corner. The muffled sound of children's voices are audible. POV: a brief glance to the right, down the tunnel from which the boy came - it's clear. Then the camera continues to float down the tunnel.

Just before reaching the bend, Alma steps into her own field of vision and continues along the tunnel, also turning the corner, but the boy is nowhere to be seen.

ALMA (V.O.)

I don't remember what happened first, the thing with Fritz or with Erwin from the neighboring farm. All I remember is that Erwin lay on our threshing floor until his funeral. Just like everyone else from the village who dies.

Alma continues walking, emerging from the tunnel and stepping into the light of the barn.

Suddenly, from her left a boy rams into her. Alma falls to the ground, as more children throw themselves on top of her. "You have to tickle her to death," shouts one child. Alma laughs, but she's struggling to breathe. More children join in, tickling Alma "to death". Alma attempts to escape, but it's impossible. More and more children pile on top of her. It tickles so much that it makes Alma scream. The sound becomes quieter as a soft murmur settles across over the scene.

CUT TO:

T3

The children slide down the haystacks at high speed. Alma stands at the very top of the haystack. Over and over, she jumps up to peek over the wooden slats of the thrashing floor. For a split second with each jump, she sees Erwin lying there, dead.

CUT TO:

T4

A small finger cautiously prods Erwin's cheek, before retreating quickly.

The children stand uneasily around Erwin's corpse, gazing at him. Gerti holds her ear against his mouth, which is slightly agape. She listens.

BOY

(Low German dialect)

Well?

Gerti shrugs.

GERTI

(Low German dialect)

Not sure.

She keeps listening. Lia pushes her aside.

LIA  
(Low German dialect)  
Let me try.

Lia listens. Suddenly, a call from below. Left behind in her wheelchair, Hedda sits alone and looks up.

HEDDA  
(Low German dialect)  
So? Is the fly still inside?!

Lia listens intently. The boy becomes restless.

BOY  
(Low German dialect)  
Come on, let's go. We're really not  
supposed to be here.

Lia holds her index finger over her mouth, hissing irritably.  
"Shh!". They all fall completely silent.

LIA  
(Low German dialect,  
whispering)  
I can hear something.

All eyes are on Lia. Alma inevitably takes a small step backwards, her face ashen. Suddenly, the noontime church bells ring loudly. The children flinch. Hedda cries out from below.

HEDDA  
(Low German dialect,  
yelling)  
Last one down gets caught by the  
corpse! He's gonna grab you by the  
ankles and pull you into the realm  
of the dead!

The children scatter agitatedly.

Hedda rapidly rolls out of the barn door onto the farmyard in her wheelchair, and bolts it shut from the outside, while the children, screaming, tumble down from the threshing floor into the haystacks.

Alma stands frozen for a moment, unable to move, peering over the edge of the threshing floor into the depth, on the haystack. Lia emerges beside her, who has to laugh as she looks down at the children frantically shaking the bolted barn door and scurry around chaotically. Now Lia repeats Hedda's call, as though announcing a race.

LIA  
(Low German dialect)  
Last one down gets caught by the  
corpse!  
(MORE)

LIA (CONT'D)

He's gonna grab you by the ankles  
and pull you into the realm of the  
dead!

Then Lia gives Alma a shove.

Alma falls, and despite lasting for only a split second, the moment seems to last an eternity.

She plummets into the hay just as Lia lands beside her. Lia immediately hurries off, so as not to be the last to reach the hatch in the wooden slats, through which the other children are already squeezing their way outside.

Panicked, Alma realizes that she's in danger of being the last one left behind in the barn.

As quickly as she can, Alma overtakes Lia, pushing her aside and squeezing herself out through the hatch, her heart pounding. Alma stands in the yard, out of breath, and stares at the hatch with the other children, captivated.

Lia doesn't appear.

Alma stares at the dark hatch in the wood. She's about to head back towards the hatch, when Lia reaches her arm out through the hole.

The children shriek, covering their eyes and slowly peeking out from behind their fingers.

Lia's arm is pulled back, her hand grapples in thin air as if desperately trying to hold onto something, but she's holding on to thin air. As if the 'corpse's ghost' were pulling on Lia's legs, her hand disappears back into the dark hole.

Suddenly, the hand shoots out again, clawing the wooden slats. With all her might, Lia pulls herself through the hatch in the wood.

When her upper body is halfway out, she suddenly starts to scream. The little boy (extra) wets himself in terror. The other children rush to Lia, pulling her with all their might until she's free.

Once again, only Alma remains frozen. Lia springs to her feet in a flash and bursts out laughing.

LIA (CONT'D)

(Low German dialect)

Fooled you, fooled you!

The other children laugh in relief. Only Alma is unable to. The little boy also looks upset, and tries to wipe away his tears. Lia hugs him tightly.

LIA (CONT'D)  
 (Low German dialect)  
 Now, now. Why all the tears? It was  
 just a joke.

Alma watches Lia, who's holding the little boy in her arms  
 and wiping away his tears.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 All summer long I waited, expecting  
 to drop dead or simply not wake up  
 again. But somehow, God must have  
 forgotten about me. Instead, he  
 took Lia.  
 If I had been the last one out  
 through the hatch, Lia would  
 probably still be alive. By the end  
 of the summer, at least I still  
 wasn't dead, but my great  
 grandmother was. And suddenly, so  
 was Lia.

73 EXT./INT. FARMYARD/OUTSIDE THE BARN/GARDEN/HOUSE - DAY / 73  
 EVENING

In the 1910s

T1

MATCH CUT.

POV Alma: Her gaze detaches itself from her body, which  
 stands in the yard, and floats upwards, observing herself.  
 She observes how she, Alma, is standing outside the barn  
 door. From the ground, Alma looks up, watching her own gaze  
 distancing itself from her.

Her gaze leaves her body behind, floating over the courtyard,  
 past her siblings, past Lia.

Further up it travels, over the roof of the house, through  
 the garden, and the apple tree in which Alma had sat.

ALMA (V.O.)  
 (Low German dialect)  
 I always thought that my great  
 grandmother would be the first  
 person to simply not die. Dying  
 didn't seem to suit her, because  
 she was so afraid of it. And then  
 suddenly, it was time.

Alma's gaze wanders through the garden, back towards the  
 house, through the back door and into the house, down the  
 hallway.



T2

Alma suddenly reappears in the frame, in her own POV, and the camera follows her.

Alma walks down the hallway, winding around corners, passing rooms as the light becomes dimmer and dimmer. The last few rays of evening sun shine through the colorful glass panels next to the double front doors, causing colorful reflections of light to dance on the walls.

ALMA (V.O.)

(Low German dialect)

She simply just fell over in the garden, on her way to the outhouse at night. Clearly she had urgent business to attend to. Hedda almost died of laughter, saying that Great Grandmother had realized that her time was running out and was scared shitless. She had already started pulling up her dressing gown. To save time when she got there, only she never arrived. Later, Father admitted that it was the only time he had ever seen his grandmother's bare bottom.

Alma stands cautiously in the doorway of a room, catching a glimpse of a scene reflected through a mirror on the wall. Great Grandmother Frieda lies in her bed, dressed in a robe.

Trudi enters the frame, covering the mirror with a black drape.

CUT TO:

ALMA (V.O.)

And just like that, the same thing happened to her as to all the other people who died.

Ugly Trudi opens a window.

ALMA (V.O.)

The window was opened to release her soul.

Trudi stops the pendulum of the grandfather clock.

ALMA

The clocks were stopped.

Stones are placed on the great grandmother's closed eyes.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Stones to ward off the evil eye.

A golden coin is placed under the tongue in Frieda's toothless mouth.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Fare for her journey across the river to the realm of the dead.

Her mouth is tied shut with a lace band.

ALMA (CONT'D)

So that no flies crawl inside.

A bible is placed between her chin and breastbone.

ALMA (CONT'D)

So that God above believes that she was a believer.

Black shoes, walking over tiles up to the bed.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Twice a day, the female undertaker comes from the village to wash the corpse.

Hot water is poured into a bowl, and a few drops of vinegar are added.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Cloths soaked in vinegar and stinging nettles are placed on the faces of the dead. But because our undertaker had kicked the bucket herself, in childbirth two weeks earlier, Trudi had to take over her duties. I remember that by the end of the week of mourning, her hands were covered in hives from all the nettles.

Trudi looks up at the camera as she places nettles on Frieda's dead face.

BLACK.

Over this we hear a quiet, incomprehensible prayer, spoken in unison.

ALMA (CONT'D)

A quick prayer for her, that she won't have to see her mother again.

74

INT. HOUSE / ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

74

In the 1910s

CLOSE UP: The great grandmother's folded hands.

Alma's small hand quickly pinches her great grandmother's skin again. Alma's hand disappears from view. Her great grandmother's skin stays in place, without relaxing to its original position. The coffin lid closes over the image of the hands, and we hear it being nailed shut.

ALMA (V.O.)

(Low German dialect)

Whenever I try to picture her face, it blurs in front of my eyes. As if I couldn't remember it, although I had seen it so often. But I still remember exactly how her hands looked.

(We see Great-grandmother Frieda's hands peeling plums).

And I remember her expression when she was dead, right before they placed the stones over her eyes. Maybe because she never looked like that when she was alive. She looked completely astonished, as though she couldn't believe her eyes. Trudi said that she looked like that because she had realized that she was going to die after all. But to me, it looked as if she were seeing something that she never expected to see in her life. As if she realized that her fear of dying had all been in vain. As if she now understood how to live, only that it was too late. Hedda thinks maybe she'll be reborn in Africa. Father thought perhaps she'd come back as a fly. He never swatted one dead again.

POV tilts upwards from the hands which are hammering the nails into the coffin lid, to show father Max' face. He's the one who's hammering.

75

EXT. HAVEL RIVER BRANCH 2 - DAY

75

In the 1980s

T1

A gaze into the sun. Angelika in voice over.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

My mom never talked about how Erika died. But I knew anyway. Mom's brother told me.

(MORE)

ANGELIKA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I only met him once, when he came to visit us on the farm. Uncle Fritz, with his wooden leg. 'Knock on wood', he told me, 'For good luck'.

Erika went into the river, like so many women did back then when the war ended.

Mom pinky-promised Erika, but when she was underwater, she just couldn't do it. The eels were swimming around, already nipping at her. She wasn't the only one who came crawling out of the river. But still, she was so ashamed that she hadn't managed to kill herself. Sometimes I think that my mom is still there, under the water with Erika.

Big flat stones cover Angelika's eyes.

Angelika lies fully dressed on the sand of the Havel beach, arms spread out wide. Irm places stones that she has collected from the water on Angelika's body.

The gentle waves of the Havel can be heard as they hit the shore. Angelika smiles as her mother places a flat, oval stone over her uncovered eye.

ANGELIKA

Warm.

Irm places a stone over her smiling mouth, raptly watching her "blind" and "mute" daughter. Her gaze wanders across the Havel, following the river's flow.

Angelika sits up, fixing her gaze on the other side of the riverbank.

IRM

(Low German dialect)

What would it be like, to look over here from the other side?

Irm lets the sand slip through her fingers, subconsciously letting it trickle down her knee.

Angelika straightens up, letting the stones fall from her eyes. She looks across to the other side of the river. Then her gaze lingers on her mother's feet, which are digging restlessly into the sand. She looks at her own feet, they look almost identical.

She stands up suddenly, the stones falling off her into the sand.

IRM (CONT'D)

What is it now?

Angelika doesn't answer, heading directly into the water.

IRM (CONT'D)

Angelika!

Angelika starts to a front crawl. Irm lets all the sand slip right through her fingers as she realizes that Angelika isn't doing a few strokes parallel to the riverbank as she usually does. Instead, she's swimming directly across the river. Irm jumps to her feet.

IRM (CONT'D)

Angelika!

She lowers her voice, looking around nervously.

Angelika swims on across the river. Irm, panic-stricken, wants to call her back, but can't shout loudly lest she draw anybody's attention to Angelika.

Angelika has already reached the opposite riverbank. She climbs out of the water, walks ashore and looks over at Irm. She stares back at her, frozen to the spot. Her legs start to tremble.

Angelika bends down, reentering the water and swimming back to Irm. Irm stands on the shore, scanning the horizon tensely for border guards.

As Angelika emerges from the water. Irm goes to meet her. Trembling, Irm slaps and shakes her daughter.

Angelika looks at her unwaveringly, opening her hand and holding it out to Irm. In her palm is sand from the other side. Staring at the sand, Irm's trembling subsides, and she breaks into incredulous laughter. Angelika laughs, too, and Irm hugs her wet daughter tightly.

IRM (CONT'D)

(Low German dialect)

Come on, let's get out of here.

Angelika and Irm gather up their belongings and cross over the dune together. Suddenly, Irm's legs give way. She has to lean on Angelika for support, needing a moment before her legs obey her again and she can keep going.

T2

The camera remains on the dune, slowly receding into the background as Irm and Angelika disappear behind it. As the dune continues to recede, the Havel comes into view.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

I remember it so clearly. How I sat with Mom at the border and swam across, even though that's impossible. You would have been shot immediately.

I also remember that Mom's legs gave way afterwards. Sometimes, the things you imagine feel so much more real than what actually happens.

And what actually happens feels completely fake - like a dream.

The camera glides underwater, sinking to the depths, losing itself in the riverbed. Eels swim into the frame.

76

EXT. DIRT ROAD TO HAVEL RIVER BRANCH - DAY

76

In the 2020s

A shaky image - POV Lenka: She's gazing downwards, her feet walking along the dirt road to the Havel. It's the same shot that we saw at the beginning of the film through Alma's POV.

Lenka looks up from her feet. Ahead of her: Kaya - she's heading along the road a few meters in front of Lenka.

Kaya's paddle board is slung over her shoulder. Her blond hair is tied loosely at the nape of her neck, a few strands escaping. Lenka sees how the plastic handle of Kaya's paddle slightly indents her shoulder. The fabric of her T-shirt is thin and worn in that spot.

In her free hand, Kaya is holding a red strawberry popsicle. Light-footed, she balances on an imaginary tightrope. She coos, laughing contentedly, and bites into her ice cream with relish, her blond hair shining.

Lenka's eyes are fixed on Kaya's neck. She tries to place her feet exactly in Kaya's footsteps.

Lenka has vanilla ice cream, instead of strawberry. She tries to spread out her arms and balance, but her heavy beach bag keeps falling off her shoulder. Strands of hair fly into her face, but not in the same way that Kaya's hair fell. The strands get caught in her mouth, sticking to the vanilla ice cream.

CUT TO:

76A

EXT. HAVEL BRANCH - DAY

76A

In the 2020s

Lenka and Kaya lie on the beach in the sun. Lenka rubs sunscreen into her face. She holds the bottle out to Kaya.

LENKA  
Want some?

Kaya shakes her head.

LENKA (CONT'D)  
But it protects your skin.

KAYA  
Don't need it.

LENKA  
You'll get a sunburn.

KAYA  
It feels nice when it tingles.

Kaya stretches out next to Lenka, closing her eyes and reaching out towards the sun with every pore in her body.

Lenka observes her new friend for a moment. The way she's lying there, breathing softly, as the summer heat beats down on her. Then her gaze wanders across the Havel, across the vast landscape.

Kaya sits up, rummaging in her bag before finally retrieving a cigarette. She sticks it in her mouth and lights it.

KAYA (CONT'D)  
Want one?

Lenka shakes her head, almost imperceptibly. Kaya smirks to herself. It was obvious to her that someone like Lenka had never smoked before in her life.

LENKA  
Where did you get those?

KAYA  
Inherited them. From my mom.

She pulls an entire pack out of her bag, showing it to Lenka.

KAYA (CONT'D)  
The last one I have left.

Kaya takes a drag on her cigarette. Lenka watches her from the corner of her eye. After a while, Lenka musters the courage to ask Kaya something which seems to have been on her mind for a while.

LENKA  
How did your mom die?

Kaya takes another drag, inhaling the smoke deep into her lungs, before leaning back and blowing it slowly into the air.

KAYA  
Lung cancer.

Lenka looks at Kaya timidly. Is she messing with her?

LENKA  
Well, why do you smoke then?

Kaya doesn't respond, blowing rings of smoke into the air.

LENKA (CONT'D)  
Aren't you afraid that you'll die  
of lung cancer, too?

Kaya takes the last puff of her cigarette, pressing it into the sand next to her. She turns to Lenka, blowing the smoke slowly into her face.

KAYA  
Everyone dies of something. Even  
you.

Lenka's heart is pounding. Does Kaya know how afraid she is of death? The two girls lock eyes.

Lenka looks away first. A silence falls between them, which Lenka can't bear.

LENKA  
Were you there when your mom died?

KAYA  
It's too hot. Come on, let's go  
swimming.

Kaya stands up, grabs her board from the bushes and heads towards the water. Lenka watches her go. Kaya takes a few steps into the water, then looks back over her shoulder.

KAYA (CONT'D)  
Come on! Maybe we'll drown.

She grins, then plunges headfirst into the water.

77

EXT. HAVEL BRANCH - DAY

77

In the 2020s

Lenka and Kaya stand chest-deep in the water. Next to them is the board, which they're holding onto tightly.



KAYA

Who can find the most beautiful  
stone or shell?

They both take a deep breath before diving down.

They plunge into the depths, retrieving stones and shells, placing them on the board. Over and over, they dive down, and collect something from the riverbed. Lenka really enjoys this game. She revels in the water, her fears dissipating. They laugh together, then Kaya has a new idea.

KAYA (CONT'D)

Let's see who can hold their breath  
the longest. On three. One, two,  
three!

Lenka and Kaya dive beneath the surface. Both girls look each other in the eyes as they hold their breath. At some point, small air bubbles start to rise up around Lenka. She makes a paddling motion with her hands, suddenly she can no longer see Kaya. The murky water is like a wall. Everywhere Lenka looks, all she sees is murky water. She can't hold her breath any longer, and emerges. She's drifted away from the board slightly, with two strokes she's next to it and grabs hold, gasping for air. She glances around. Kaya doesn't seem to be underwater. Lenka looks around for a while, until eventually Kaya surfaces. She has a stone in her hand and places it on the board.

Again. Who can hold their breath the longest. Lenka explains:

LENKA

I always float upwards. I can't  
seem to stay down.

KAYA

Then hold on to me.

Holding hands, the girls take a deep breath, diving down together.

Suddenly, Kaya appears in front of Lenka underwater and looks her in the eye. She's holding tightly onto her wrist, and pulls her down to the riverbed. The blurry image shows the sandy floor, twigs and shells, a few water plants, silt.

Small air bubbles erupt from Lenka's mouth. She can't hold her breath any longer. Only now does Lenka notice that Kaya is holding a large rock lying on the riverbed with her legs, which prevents her from drifting upwards. Air bubbles emit from Kaya's mouth too. They look at each other. She loosens her grip on Lenka's arm, trying to push herself up. But Lenka suddenly grabs hold, collecting the remaining air in her lungs and digging her feet into the rock beneath her. She holds Kaya as tightly as she can. Air bubbles still emit from Kaya, big ones, she's struggling. Lenka resists, staring Kaya in the eyes, seeing the panic, feeling Kaya's body squirm.

Suddenly, an eel swims past Lenka and Kaya, grazing Lenka's arm. Lenka recoils, staring at the eel in horror. Her grip on Kaya's wrist loosens, and from the corner of her eye, Lenka sees Kaya swimming past her as she pulls herself through the water up to the surface.

Lenka is alone underwater. The rays of sun gleam in the depths, until nothing stirs in the darkness. A dark wall in front of her. Lenka suddenly loses all sense of time; it seems to stretch out endlessly. How long has she been down there?

Suddenly, hands are pulling Lenka upwards. Only when she breaks the surface does she notice the burning sensation in her lungs.

CUT TO:

The girls float along the calm, narrow branch of the Havel, lying on Kaya's paddle board. In front of them on the board are the stones and shells that they've collected.

The sandy dunes along the shore are overgrown with reeds and dense vegetation. Nature seems to be left to its own devices here, with lily pads bobbing on the water's surface.

LENKA (V.O.)

I remember that Nelly desperately wanted to come with us, but I didn't let her, because I didn't want her there. I remember thinking that I had lived my life for nothing, because I chose vanilla ice cream instead of strawberry, like Kaya. I was certain that with this decision, I had irrevocably steered my life in the wrong direction. As if I were doomed to never be happy again. During that summer, I started to think that, if I were someone else, I would always be happier. I even envied other people's misfortunes, even the fact that Kaya's mother died of cancer. As if there were a different, deeper quality of her unhappiness than my own. I wished that something like that would happen to me, too, so that I could be like her. Now I think that, if only I hadn't thought that my life was over just because I chose vanilla ice cream, then perhaps everything would have turned out differently.

Lenka gazes at Kaya, who's lying next to her. She pushes her lower jaw outwards the same way that Kaya does.

The current carries the girls around the next bend. Kaya sits up, kneeling gracefully on her board, and steers it with her paddle. Her hair flows down her back. Lenka watches Kaya gliding down the river, noble and silent like a warrior.

78

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

78

In the 2020s

Music. Bustle. A hot, lively summer day. A garden party. The sausages sizzle on the grill. Children jump around excitedly under the sprinkler. They laugh - even Lenka, who's being shot at with water pistols.

One of Christa's friends' daughter has joined them. She's Lenka's age, and is wearing a bikini. Almost imperceptibly, she throws Lenka a disparaging glance.

Lenka inwardly recoils.

Suddenly, Lenka feels naked, ashamed to be running around topless, in her underwear, like a child. She wants to leave, or at least put on a bikini, even a swimsuit. She looks up, her gaze lingering on one of the fathers of the romping children, a friend of the family. She notices that he's looking at her breasts, her nipples, which are already starting to develop. For a moment they lock eyes, and the man sees that Lenka has noticed his gaze.

It's not a lustful gaze, more registering look, yet still different than if he were just looking at the plate in his hand.

Lenka blushes, wanting to cover her chest with her arm, but that would be too obvious. She doesn't want to let him know that his gaze has affected her. She realizes that he knows she saw him looking, but pretends not to have noticed. However, she doesn't know what to do with herself now.

It's like she's in on a secret that she doesn't want any part of.

Lenka wants to disappear, to vanish, to simply cease to exist, but everything is too conspicuous. Her only option is to stay exactly where she is, playing the role of the carefree child that she was a mere moment ago.

Lenka pretends to be engrossed with splashing her hands in the water. She curves her back, pushing her face towards the water as she pretends to watch the fly floating on the surface. She hunches in such a way that her chest is pushed inwards.

Then suddenly, she stops, feeling the man's gaze on her again. She pushes her jaw forwards, just as Kaya always does, and lifts her head. Her gaze becomes piercing, her body straightens.

She looks the man in the eye and reaches for a stone that lies on the ground next to the kiddie pool, closing her hand around it.

79 EXT. GARDEN - EVENING

79

In the 2020s

A fire burns in the middle, gathered around it a circle of seven or eight smiling people (38 - 50). An exuberant summer evening vibe.

The children pretend to be poor farmer's children. They sit around the fire gnawing on chicken legs, wolfing down the meat as if they were starving and hadn't eaten a thing for months, just like they've seen in the movies. One of the children comments how tasty frogs' legs are.

One child pretends that he only has one leg, because he lost the other in the war.

80 INT. FARMYARD / HOUSE / HALLWAY / ROOM - EVENING

80

In the 1910s

T1

Alma walks down the hallway. The house is silent, she doesn't encounter anyone. She heads downstairs, peeking into the kitchen, there's nobody there. Then, turning the corner, she sees Ugly Trudi standing in the dark hallway, eavesdropping at a half-open door.

Alma approaches her. A floorboard creaks. Ugly Trudi sees her and quickly flees.

Alma approaches the door.

She peers through the keyhole, struggling to keep one eye pressed shut. Straining, she opens her mouth, tongue lolling out. She presses her eye tightly to the keyhole and her tongue taps against the iron door handle again.

T2

She sees a MAN (48) sitting on the wooden bench against the wall and drinking a glass of milk. Her mother sits in her rocking chair. Lia stands there, her hands folded and eyes downcast. Her father Max sits behind his desk, smoking a pipe. The stranger stands up, extending his hand out to Father Max, saying that the deal is done. After the solstice, Lia will start working as a maid on his farm.

Father Max looks at his outstretched hand, and Lia's shoulders start to tremble. Father Max stands up and shakes the man's hand. The man turns to Mother Emma, instructing her to take care of the "women's matters".

Mother Emma nods. The man moves towards the door.

T3

Alma races down the hallway, seeing through the open double doors that there's a fire in the yard. Blazing.

She runs onto the farmyard, seeing the maids, farmhands and her other siblings standing around the big fire. She joins them.

She sees her father Max coming out of the house, carrying Mother Emma over his shoulder, approaching the fire and pretending to throw her into the blaze. Some of the bystanders let out a startled cry, then laugh in relief when they realize that the father was joking. He gently sets Mother Emma back down on the ground.

The stranger also heads out, tipping his hat in farewell and leaving the yard through the gate. Finally, Lia comes down the steps in a daze, standing between Big Berta and Ugly Trudi in front of the fire. They immediately link arms with her: she's one of them now. Lia stares into the fire.

POV Alma: Detached, rising with the embers, past a window. Behind it, the curtain waves slightly and Fritz' shadow becomes visible.

81

EXT. GARDEN - EVENING

81

In the 1980s

A girl's hands glide over the grass in a swaying motion. The blades slip through her fingers, as if she were combing them.

Angelika lies on a swing chair, pushing the ground away with one leg to swing herself. She stares at the grass beside her, swaying around her hand.

In the distance, Rainer appears in front of her from a grove of trees. He loads his rubber ball into a slingshot (a fork with a rubber band), aiming at Angelika's face, before dropping his arms at the last moment.

Angelika lies there, taking no notice of Rainer. She keeps staring at the grass, methodically slipping through her fingers in time with the swing, gliding through them. Her new glasses lie next to her on the swing's cushion.

Angelika's gaze sweeps across the garden, where a small barbecue is taking place. Irm carries a punchbowl from the house over to the buffet table. Angelika watches her mother for a while, as she sets down the punchbowl, pondering for a moment before moving it again.

Angelika closes her eyes almost into slits, rocking back and forth, Angelika squints as she watches her mother, so that she disappears, then reappears. Disappears, reappears...

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

If I want to lift my leg, then I can. And if I want to lift my arm, I can. But if I want my heart to stop, it doesn't. It just keeps beating. Maybe I'm just not willing it hard enough, for it to work. If I really, really wanted to, could I make it stop?

Now.

Suddenly the sound is on, much too loud - with shrill laughter and GDR era pop music.

CUT TO:

82

EXT. GARDEN - EVENING

82

In the 1980s

The GDR pop music blares through the garden. Angelika stands behind the house in the garden, next to a tree. Her new glasses are perched on her nose, and she peers through the garden at the barbecue.

Irm is standing with her neighbors, laughing contentedly. Then Angelika removes her glasses, placing them next to her in the grass. Taking a swing for momentum, she thrusts her hands towards the ground, and her feet swing above her, landing against the tree. In her handstand, Angelika sees the world upside down. She takes a couple of steps on her hands. Irm, Albat and Uwe come into her field of vision, standing further back and grilling sausages.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)

If we actually go about our lives seeing everything upside down, then maybe in reality everything is the other way around. So you could decide that bad things are actually good.

83

EXT. GARDEN / FARMYARD / BARN - DAY

83

In the 1980s

T1

Angelika stands with Rainer in the barn. She flicks the ash into the straw on the floor, and it smolders before falling to the ground. We watch Angelika as she smokes the entire cigarette.

She flings the butt into the straw, watching intently, as though waiting for it to catch fire.

Rainer leans against a beam, bouncing his rubber ball. He looks at her, then at the cigarette butt. Faint smoke billows from the straw. Angelika laughs, looking at him defiantly.

ANGELIKA

Chicken?

In lieu of an answer, Rainer throws his ball faster against the wooden beam in front of him. Angelika watches as it slowly starts to kindle. Rainer can't help himself. He's getting nervous, and when he sees the first small flame, he jumps up and stomps it out with his foot. He stomps thoroughly. Angelika grins.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)

Told you so. You're a chicken.

She ruffles his hair and leaves the barn.

Rainer's gaze follows her. She crosses the yard, walking past the house and into the garden, striding through the grass. The soft pop music grows louder. She approaches a group of people who are visible in the distance, out of focus. They call out to her, waving - there you are, quick, come on, we've been waiting.

T2

Angelika's family gathers for a group photo. Angelika positions herself at the edge of the group, Rainer joins, too, shuffling sluggishly to the other side.

The photographer makes energetic sweeping gestures, indicating for everyone to squeeze closer together. Angelika's arm presses slightly against Uwe's.

Angelika gets goosebumps on her neck. She fixes her eyes on something in the distance. From there a gaze belonging to no-one looks back at her - her frightened face, as if reacting to something.

Everybody says "cheese" and smiles at the camera. Angelika takes a half-step in the direction of the gaze. Then the moment is over. The polaroid photo is removed from the camera. From Angelika's POV we see her mother Irm excitedly taking the polaroid.

And now gently shake it dry, the photographer demonstrates.

IRM  
Like this?

Irm gently shakes the photo, with anticipation.

IRM (CONT'D)  
And now we'll be able to see it,  
right?

The photographer waves her off - soon.

IRM (CONT'D)  
It develops automatically? If  
someone had told us that a few  
years ago, we would have thought  
they were crazy.

The crowd laughs.

No! Irm cries out, as the image appears. Everyone surrounds Irm, looking at the polaroid, laughing and making comments about each other.

CLOSE UP of the photo. All the family members are smiling at the camera, but Angelika appears like a blurred shadow, as if she were transparent - a ghost. People keep commenting on it:

Well, only Angie isn't really on the picture. Angelika, look - Irm turns to hand her the photo. But nobody's there. Everyone looks around, even Rainer scans his surroundings. Angelika is gone. He's blinded suddenly, holding the back of his hand to his forehead.

The reflecting sunlight dances and shimmers over his body, blinding him whenever he tries to take his hand away. He tries to see where the reflection is coming from, but Angelika, who he suspected was behind it, is nowhere to be seen. The sound fades to silence, and murmuring sets in.

ANGELIKA (V.O.)  
I can still remember I got a diary  
for my 15th birthday. I never knew  
what to write in it, as if my  
thoughts somehow weren't worthy.  
Whenever I tried to write, I  
thought that someone would find it  
and read it after my death, and  
what a shock that would be for my  
mom.

(MORE)



ANGELIKA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But if she finds it after my death without me having written a single word, she might think that I didn't like her gift, or that I was ungrateful or something. So I started writing down the opposite of what I was thinking, sentences that would make my mom happy when I was gone.

84 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

84

In the 1910s

Through a window in the house, Alma sees Lia being carried out on a stretcher, dead. She sees her mother Emma and her father Max, Gerti and a boy (extra), and Big Berta coming from across the yard.

85 INT. HOUSE / PARLOR - DAY

85

In the 1910s

Lia's post-mortem photo is being taken. Lia is suspended in a frame, which is holding her up. Her arms are bent and draped. Her eyelids are sewn closed with a small stitch, so that they stay open and don't close.

Mother Emma stands behind Lia in her black veil, holding her in place.

All the other family members are arranged around Lia. Little Cripple Hedda in her wheelchair, a boy (extra), Gerti and Father Max with his pipe...

Finally, Alma enters the frame, resting her hand on Lia's shoulder, standing next to her sitting sister.

ALMA (V.O.)

Lia didn't work there very long, on that farm where she went after the solstice. After a week, she was suddenly dead. I saw what happened.

They have to stay still for the exposure. Alma stands next to Lia unblinkingly.

ALMA (V.O.)

Later, when they wanted to know what had happened, I said it was a work accident.

86 EXT. GARDEN - DAY

86

In the 2020s

Lenka and Nelly frolic through the garden, playing make believe horses. Lenka throws her head back, shaking her hair and laughing exuberantly, like in the "Mandy" cartoon.

LENKA  
Look! The butterflies and the  
flowers!

She giggles exaggeratedly. So does Nelly.

NELLY  
Giddy up, Trixie!

Nelly also throws back her head and laughs. Hannes passes by his daughters and asks them as he walks by:

HANNES  
(bemused)  
What are you two playing?

Nelly calls after him.

NELLY  
Being happy!

87 EXT./INT. FARMYARD / HOUSE / HALLWAY - DAY

87

In the 2020s

T1

A hand holds a meatball, bringing it towards a mouth. A bite is taken. The long fingers are holding the meatball in an aesthetically pleasing way, with a raised pinky. Lenka tries to hold her meatball in the same way as Kaya.

Kaya and Lenka both sit in the sun. Behind them the double doors to the house are open. Christa is standing in the yard, handing out ice cream to the children from a cooler. She comes over to Lenka and Kaya.

CHRISTA  
What'll it be? Vanilla or  
strawberry?

Lenka glances at Kaya, waiting to hear her answer.

KAYA  
Strawberry, please.

CHRISTA  
One strawberry ice cream, coming  
right up.

Christa reaches into the cooler, fishing out a strawberry ice cream and reaching it over to Kaya.

CHRISTA (CONT'D)  
And vanilla for Lenka, as usual...

Christa is already rummaging through the cooler.

LENKA  
No, I'll have strawberry, too.

Christa pauses. Then she continues rummaging, for strawberry ice cream instead of vanilla.

CHRISTA  
(mumbling)  
Strawberry, too...

Christa fishes a strawberry ice cream out of the cooler and hands it to Lenka. Nelly runs over contentedly, clinging onto Christa's legs.

NELLY  
I want strawberry ice cream, too.

Christa reaches into the cooler, rummaging around, then:

CHRISTA  
Sorry honey, we're out of  
strawberry.

Christa hands Nelly a vanilla ice cream. Disappointed, Nelly whines in protest.

NELLY  
But I want strawberry.

Kaya holds her strawberry ice cream out to Nelly.

KAYA  
We can swap.

Nelly's face brightens, as the two switch ice creams.

Lenka freezes, watching powerlessly as the ice cream is exchanged, and now yet again she doesn't have the same as Kaya. Lenka watches as Kaya opens the vanilla ice cream and sucks on it with relish.

CUT TO:

T2

Christa and Hannes' friends carry their things out for the journey back, and have to keep squeezing past the girls. Christa stands chatting with a FEMALE FRIEND in the hallway, while the two girls can be seen licking their ice creams in the foreground.

FEMALE FRIEND (O.S.)

... sure, it's a lot of work, but it's manageable. The foundation is solid, that's the main thing, the roofs are watertight... Oh, look... that's nice with the glass inlays in the windows. Sadly, we couldn't salvage our old windows.

CHRISTA (O.S.)

Sometimes I do think that it's never ending.

FEMALE FRIEND (O.S.)

Yeah. It's kind of a lifelong task, but little by little... Heiner is still fixing stuff up at our place, and we've already been there 10, no wait 11... 11 years.

Lenka's gaze is fixed on Kaya, who's finishing the rest of her vanilla ice cream.

In the background, Nelly and the other younger children scatter. They're playing hide and seek. One of the children can be heard in the background, counting down.

88

INT. BARN - DAY

88

In the 2020s

T1

Nelly slips into the barn, pushing the wooden door shut behind her. She stands in the barn with her strawberry ice cream, looking around for a good hiding spot. It's much darker in the barn than it is outside. Only a few rays of sunlight shine through the cracks. Her gaze falls on the hayloft up above.

She climbs up the ladder.

T2

Nelly steps carefully onto the edge of the threshing floor. She finishes her ice cream, and glances down. On the ground is a layer of hay. It's thick. Having eaten her ice cream, she throws the popsicle stick down into the depths, to see how far down it is.

She spreads her arms, then peeks down. It's high. She lets her arms drop again. She reaches for a few bundles of hay and kicks them down into the depths.

She watches as they hit the ground and fall apart. Now there is a small haystack below.

She spreads her arms again, standing on the edge of the chasm, firing up her propeller engine.

CUT TO:

89

EXT./INT. FARMYARD / HOUSE / HALLWAY - DAY

89

T1

Children run across the yard past Lenka and Kaya. They're playing "hide and seek tag".

One of them tags Kaya, "You're it". Kaya springs to her bare feet, removing her headphones and letting them drop onto the steps as she chases the children.

Lenka stays behind.

She watches Kaya, the way her golden hair falls shining down her back, swaying back and forth, how she throws her head back, laughing as she runs, then disappears around the corner of the house with the children.

Lenka's gaze falls on Kaya's sandals, left behind on the steps.

She stares transfixed at the footprint that has been imprinted into the sandal over the summer. Lenka cautiously stretches out her foot, slipping on one sandal and then the other. She sticks an earbud from Kaya's headphones into her ear. Music. From memory, Lenka imitates Kaya, legs tilted to the side, left foot turned in. Sudden static interrupts the music repeatedly, until it breaks off completely. The connection is too weak. Kaya has her phone in her pants pocket, and now she's too far away. White noise sets in, grows menacingly louder.

BLACK.

Suddenly Lenka is overcome by a feeling, like a jolt through her body, a wave. She looks up.

CUT TO:

T2

POV: The free fall from the threshing floor, as the ground gets closer and closer.

CUT TO:

T3

LONG SHOT: the farmyard spread out before us. The last few friends get into their cars.

Christa and Hannes can be seen from behind, Lenka joins them. A friend honks his horn in farewell, a few last words called through the open car windows. The sound fades, but is still audible in the background. While Lenka and her parents wave goodbye and laugh:

NELLY (V.O.)

I'm not really sure if I really thought I could fly. But I remember being surprised that I was actually falling instead of flying. Just before I hit the ground, I thought that the haystack was to blame for my fall. If I hadn't done that, it would have worked, and I would have flown.

CUT TO:

T4

Nelly lies on the ground in the hay. She's not moving. Next to her lies the strawberry popsicle stick, the one she had thrown down.

T5

Behind her eyelids, the pulsating orange sunlight shimmers.

Crackling white noise can be heard. It swells into a kind of primordial sound. Then suddenly: BLACK.

90

EXT. FIELD - DAY

90

In the 1910s

FADE IN

Alma stands in the field, gathering a bundle of hay and binding it together with a piece of straw. The wind whips across the field.

A thunderous bubbling, a loud, inescapable rumbling, like a primal roar. A chorus of women's voices drifts across the field as if from afar. It mingles with the sound of the approaching harvest wagon, the dull hoof clacking of the horses pulling it.

When Alma looks up, she sees Lia sitting some distance away, in the neighboring field belonging to the other farmer. She's sitting on a fully loaded harvest wagon, which is being pulled through the furrows by two large horses.

Lia sits motionlessly, staring at an imaginary point. Suddenly Lia lifts her face, as if she sensed Alma's gaze on her. Her eyes scan the field, then she spots Alma.

Alma waves at her.

Lia looks at her, smiling wearily, winking at her twice. Then she suddenly lets herself fall from above, between horse and cart, getting caught under the wheels.

Alma wants to scream, but no sound comes out. The wind picks up, blowing sand into Alma's eyes, forcing her to close them. When she opens her eyes again, Lia is gone.

BLACK FILLS THE SCREEN.

Silence. For a few moments, an afterimage remains, and we can't be sure if it's really visible or if it's just in our mind's eye.

BLACK.

THE END