

Pagan Man

Written by
The Wicked Witch of the...

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FADE IN:

EXT. ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS - WILD BEAVER COMMUNE - NIGHT

A full MOON hangs above a forest clearing.

A large fire crackles in the middle of a wide stone circle, whilst the rhythmic harmony of wooden poles, beaten together, fills the air.

Barefooted, a line of hooded FIGURES emerge, striking the wooden instruments. At first slow, then quicker...quicker.

They skip, dance, circle the fire.

A female voice SHRIEKS - a signal.

The others stop. They raise their hands into the night sky.

The voice WAILS in ecstasy as...

INT. NEW YORK - APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

...a naked WOMAN, on a bed, arches her back in delight.

From below, a man's head emerges, GUS PAINE, 35. He licks and kisses her firm mid rift. Eager.

He sits up, reaches over and gathers a bottle of champagne.

OLGA (V.O.)
Blessed Earth Goddess, we ask you,
soak us with your passion...

The champagne pours on to the woman's breasts.

OLGA (V.O.)
...so we may taste your wisdom...

Gus suckles the woman's breasts.

OLGA (V.O.)
...and give thanks to your MOON...

The woman's buttocks pump up and down.

OLGA (V.O.)
...which guides us, so we may leave
our troubles...behind.

Gus, tip toes to the bedroom door. The woman sleeps. He takes one last look at the bed, adjusts his collar, smiles.

EXT. NEW YORK, MANHATTAN - PAVEMENT CASH POINT - DAY

Gus strides along in a pale two piece suit, open neck shirt, chunky belt - a wide, contented grin across his face.

He looks smart, acts smart, but a closer look shows scuffed shoes, frayed cuffs and a missing button.

As he passes an ATM, he stops, checks his wallet, empty. After two cards refuse him money, the last card obliges.

He looks down at his wallet, reflects.

INT. NEW YORK, MANHATTAN - JIMMY'S BAR - NIGHT

It's late. Gus nods to a few regulars, winks at a passing waitress - she looks back smiling - and sits at the bar.

The barman, JIMMY, 45, skinny, spots him and moves over.

JIMMY

Back already? Hey, why don't I get lucky?

Jimmy fixes Gus a drink without asking.

GUS

That's a secret known only to those with charm and style, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Style, pah. After a bottle of JD I can tell ya, you ain't got that much style.

Gus laughs. He remembers something.

GUS

Hey Jim, if you hear of any, you know, opportunities, give me a shout.

JIMMY

Well, well. Times are hard when party boy wants a job. Yeah, I can listen out. What ya good at, other than dropping your pants.

GUS

You want more! I don't know. A place with my name, like yours.

Jimmy leans across the bar, sincere.

JIMMY

Some free advice, Gus. Steer clear of bars. You'd drink the profit. Must be something else?

Gus forces a laugh, looks at his drink, finishes it.

GUS

One more before bed time.

INT. BASEMENT CLUB - NIGHT

The music pumps, smoke fills the air and scantily clad GIRLS dance on a table. The place rocks.

In a booth, to the side, a few MEN play cards, Gus in the middle. He puts down his cards, wins the pot.

GUS

Well gentlemen, that's made my day.
(Looking at girls)
Now, what's on sale.

He grabs a bottle of Jack Daniels and joins the girls.

LATER

Bottle finished, Gus sits next to a girl. He holds up a few dollars, tries to put it in her hot pants, but misses. She giggles, takes hold of the money and stands up.

Gus tries to follow, but falls down. He rolls amongst empty bottles and discarded cigarettes.

The girl walks.

EXT. NEW YORK, MANHATTAN - PAVEMENT - DAY

Gus staggers outside, pulls his collar around his neck, and heads off towards a mobile hot dog stand.

GUS

(slurring)
Jumbo chilli dog, extra onions.

Gus checks his wallet. No money. A crumpled note, deep in a pocket, saves the day.

Gus stuffs the hot dog into his mouth.

EXT. WILD BEAVER COMMUNE - FRONT GATES - DAY

A printed sign, WILD BEAVER - WICCA COMMUNE, hangs at the entrance to a hamlet of run down, timber buildings.

Above, the hills rise into a mist from which the spruce descends down to the camp. A stream cascades alongside.

Natural. Remote.

A dirt track runs past each building and ends beyond the camp at a grass clearing. In the middle lies the stone circle.

One building is marked, OFFICE.

INT. WILD BEAVER COMMUNE - OLGA'S OFFICE - DAY

OLGA, 65, round face, long wavy grey hair, sits behind a formal desk, files on one side, a dated computer on the other. She studies a bank statement, sighs.

A KNOCK at the door.

OLGA

Enter.

JOY, 25, enters. A natural beauty, perfect pale skin, kind eyes. She wears a colorful robe, a necklace of feathers.

Door closed, she takes a seat, wipes dirt off her hands.

JOY

Wiccan Mother, you sent for me?

OLGA

Ah, Joy. I'm sad to say our heart felt prayers, spells, everything, have yet to be answered. Even though our needs are few, we are vulnerable.

JOY

Shall I mix another potion?

OLGA

Sod all that's going to do. Sorry my child, I'm just concerned.

Joy sits still, hands on lap. She looks down, pensive.

OLGA (CONT'D)

My child, you have been here one year. I remember your plea to join us, so passionate. I also recall your family paid for your journey.

Joy looks up.

OLGA (CONT'D)

Desperate times require desperate questions. Could they help us?

JOY

Spiritual Mother, I wish they could, but they have so little.

Olga looks down disappointed.

OLGA

OK, you better leave then.

JOY

Pardon.

OLGA

Off you go, shut the door.

Joy fidgets, concerned. Does she have to pack her bags?

Olga peers up at her, annoyed.

OLGA (CONT'D)

I'll see you at evening prayer.

Joy breathes out with relief, leaves. Olga watches, cold.

Door closed, Olga opens a side draw. She stares at the unseen contents. Her hands tremble.

She slams the draw shut, locks it.

INT. GILBERT ATTORNEYS - HORACE GILBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

HORACE GILBERT, 67, grey hair, colorful bow tie, three piece suit, studies a letter on his desk. Alongside, TWO envelopes.

He shakes his head, opens a draw and extracts an old framed photograph.

The photo is of him, much younger, and a girl, both happy. The cuddle each other, beaming at the camera.

On the back is written, NEVER FORGET ME. MOLLY xxx.

INT. GUS'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE - DAY

Gus wakes up on the sofa, same clothes as the night before. Relish smeared across his face. On the floor, an empty beer bottle and hot dog wrapper.

He sits up and has a COUGHING fit.

INT. GUS'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Coffee in hand, he sits at a table, checks his post - unpaid bills, overdue rent.

The phone RINGS.

He checks the screen, it reads, FAITH. Something triggers, his eyes open and he tries to clear his throat.

GUS

Good morning little sis and no, I haven't forgotten...this afternoon.

FAITH (V.O.)

I know, I know. But you have such a busy life. I know it's going to be different, but we're all looking forward to seeing you.

GUS

Yeah, what's this lawyer want? We haven't seen him or Aunt Molly since...Mum died? I don't like it.

FAITH (V.O.)

Look, just get here, I'll make supper. Mikey's so excited.

MINUTES LATER

Gus puts the phone down, reflects.

He walks over to a draw and finds a loose file. On the outside it's labelled, MUM.

Inside, he finds an envelope labelled, AUTOPSY - MRS MARGARET PAINE. He stares at the envelope.

He shakes his head, throws it back into the file.

EXT. NEW YORK SUBURB - FAITH'S APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

A gang of street KIDS lurk in front of a run down block of flats, one of many in the neighbourhood. They watch Gus.

He holds a small bunch of flowers, corner shop style. Basic.

INT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY

FAITH, 25, striking eyes, tied back hair, a worn face that suggests too much work with too little sleep, scampers to the door.

She throws her arms around Gus. A young boy, MIKEY, 10, short boyish hair, runs after her and joins in. Gus smiles.

MIKEY

(shouting)

Uncle Gus.

They walk into the--

KITCHEN

--where Gus hands Faith the flowers and a few dollars.

FAITH

Oh, you're too good to me. Work still a success? We're so proud.

Gus turns away, smiles at Mikey and ruffles his hair. He produces a chocolate bar.

He turns to Faith. She looks at the eager Mikey.

FAITH (CONT'D)
 Oh, go on. I really try to keep him
 healthy, but around here it's...

Faith sighs. Mikey runs off.

FAITH (CONT'D)
 You know he loves you, like a
 father...Anyway, how you keeping?
 Found a good woman yet?

Gus shakes his head. Doesn't want to talk about it.

FAITH (CONT'D)
 Look, you're a great guy, caring.
 One day a lucky girl will appear. I
 can see her now...

INT. WILD BEAVER COMMUNE - JOY'S ROOM - DAY

Joy stands in front of an old sink and mirror.

FAITH (V.O.)
 ...classy...

Joy studies her arm pits. Bushy.

FAITH (V.O.)
 ...trendy...

Joy holds up some large pants. Stained.

FAITH (V.O.)
 ...maybe a fashion icon...

Joy inspects her yellow toe nails. Extracts fluff.

FAITH (V.O.)
 One day, one day, she'll find you.

Joy sighs, looks in the mirror, then around her small room. A
 simple life, few belongings. A sad look.

A photo of Joy and family, all smiling, rests on a shelf.

She lies down on her bed, photo on her chest.

INT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE - DAY

Gus sits opposite Faith, beer in hand.

FAITH
 He said it's about Aunt Molly and
 it's important, that's all. What's
 the problem? He helped you after
 Mum, didn't he?

GUS

Don't trust them. They always think they have something on you. Could be after money.

Faith stands up and walks over. Puts her arm round him.

FAITH

Always the worrier. You take too much responsibility.

Gus looks away.

INT. WILD BEAVER COMMUNE - MEETING HOUSE - NIGHT

Candles line the simple timber barn. A large pentacle - circle with inner star - painted on the end wall.

A bouquet of wild flowers in the middle.

Along the sides, plain wooden benches line the walls. In silence, twenty women sit, heads bowed. Silent. Holy.

Olga rises.

In hand, a wooden staff covered with beads and feathers.

OLGA

Ever as I pass through the ways do
I feel the presence of the Goddess.
She abides in me, and I in her
forever. For good do I strive and
for good do I live...

GUS (V.O.)

What the fuck?

INT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Gus faces Faith and Horace, in shock.

FAITH

Gus!

Gus snaps out of it, startled by his own swearing.

GUS

Sorry. This is insane. I GO and
LIVE in a psycho village, for THREE
months! Why the hell do that?
Anyway, she's dead. She can't ask
that?

Horace nods his head, she can.

HORACE

Your mother's sister, Molly, was a
very dear friend.

(MORE)

HORACE (CONT'D)

When she asked me to see out her wishes, I considered it to be an honour. Whatever her...motives.

Faith, leans forward and touches Horace's arm, tender.

Gus fidgets. Not happy.

GUS

But, but. Why not just give us the money? Bloody hell we need it.

Faith stares at Gus, horrified at the way he's talking.

HORACE

I don't know, but her wishes are clear. You, and your sister, will receive the inheritance, **five hundred thousand dollars**, if you comply with her instructions, or...

GUS

It goes to the salad eating dikes. Yeah, yeah. Do they know that?

Horace shakes his head. Gus slumps back into his chair.

FAITH

Gus, what's wrong with you! You're not like this. Horace, I'm sorry.

HORACE

Don't worry my dear. I understand.

Horace stands up, hands Faith an envelope.

HORACE (CONT'D)

The details are inside...I proposed to Molly in 1975. It was hot. She said no, told me I was too good for her, and left. I hadn't seen her in decades until she sat in my office, a year ago. She was dying.

He gathers his coat, heads to the door. Faith follows.

FAITH

Thank you. Gus and I will talk.

Horace turns to Gus.

HORACE

Gus, it's like this. When she died, she turned to two people. Me, and you. She choose you for a reason... You have one week to agree, or the money goes...

Faith shuts the door, walks into the lounge, stern.

FAITH

Gus, what is wrong with you? You're acting like a selfish prick.

GUS

I can't go. I just can't go.

Mikey peers round the door, concerned by the noise.

INT. WILD BEAVER - MEETING HOUSE - NIGHT

Staff in hand, Olga addresses the women.

OLGA

My spiritual sisters, I have sad news. Our dear friend, Molly, ended her struggle with this world. May she soar with the angels.

The women gasp, some start to sob. They comfort each other.

OLGA (CONT'D)

There is more. You all know our financial position is critical. After Molly left us, it became clear that...she stole our reserve, the week I left her in charge.

Gasps.

OLGA (CONT'D)

I must confess, I couldn't take this further, whilst she was sick.

Amongst the tears, they nod agreement. Olga sighs.

OLGA (CONT'D)

Some people think we are strange. I don't know, will anybody help us?

GUS (V.O.)

I'd rather lick my arsehole!

INT. FAITHS APARTMENT - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Gus paces around the room, manic. Faith starts to cry.

FAITH

For Gods sake, what's the problem?

Gus stops, picks up a family photo. Stares.

GUS

(softly)

We lived there once. You, me...Mum. Just after you were born.