

*Flames*

by Christoffer Kirkebye-Hansen (with a nod to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*)

20/3 2020 – Today, Jack wrote me, well actually he wrote the whole group, but first he called me. He was dying to get out, he said; his mom was driving him insane, and he had this idea, like he always does, but this one wasn't actually that bad. He wanted to create his own night-club I know it sounds crazy, but here's the catch: obviously we can't just rent a place, partly due to this lockdown and partly our parents' strict opinions. Instead, we met at an abandoned house, I brought the SoundBoks and Oliver and Garrett brought some coloured fairy lights and spot lights. We spent the night just drinking and setting up the lights. Jack presided over our efforts per usual and to be honest it turned out spectacularly, like one of those SoHo beer gardens, but with much cleaner air. Parents couldn't know though, so I just told them I was going for a run for 3 hours...

28/3 2020 – Last night was craazy! We all went to the Garden Club, as Jack named it, via an array of photos of him and some guy named Roger spray-painting it over the entrance. The photos apparently weren't just sent to our group but basically all of Jack's friends so A LOT. It was like the climax of Project X in there. I felt kind of uncomfortable that we were so many together, but Roger was an absolute mad lad and he had brought some mushrooms that he called "cubes." They tasted liked chanterelles, and it took a while before they kicked in. This was lucky though: there was this girl, I think her name was Simone, although it sounds awfully rare for it to be true. However, she was just so cool, not like an arrogant smart-ass, but like really mature and she just understood what I was saying, in the way I wanted to be understood. I asked her about the virus, of course - it's all anybody can talk about, and she just shrugged it off and said that she never saw anybody below the age of 40, so she wasn't really afraid of getting it. I think the party ended at 5 a.m. or so, mom and dad were at least pissed.

29/3 2020 – Yoooo, I found her on FB and she is at least as hot as I remember her, Simone, Simone Swineford. With wild red curls like the colour of autumn leaves, and these nutmeg brown eyes slightly dusty, like an ancient roman sculpture is dusty, you know? Ethereal beauty. And her skin white like fine paper, like birch bark so very delicate. Anyways, Jack told me his mom had found out about the party, and was threatening to expose us, but while I was cleaning up the attic, I came across a box with 10 gasmasks of the kind used in the First World War, so I guess if we wear those...

4/4 2020 – Last night I brought the gasmasks, and people loved them, of course Jack's mom had also encouraged us to wear them, but still. Roger had also brought some weed-burners but they were tuned almost to a flame-thrower like level. Roger and Jack made this major bonfire and created this holy atmosphere; we were all dancing around it while chanting about killing the virus and burning it. Maybe the shrooms added a bit of the atmosphere too. It was just laughs but almost felt like being in a cult. Also, I got to make out with Simone, I know right?! Best night ever! I can't fail to mention that Jack has been different

lately, like kind of angry, I don't know who he is angry at, but I get the same vibes from Roger: he makes me uncomfortable.

11/4 2020 – Last night there was no Simone, she hadn't told me she wouldn't come but some of her friends told me she was sick. Immediately Roger had burst out that she shouldn't bring any of that coronavirus to the Garden, and Jack like a dog-owner pulling his visibly violent dog back while being equally vicious in his remarks, jumped on Roger's bandwagon. I had to step in and go to Simone's defence. No. I wanted to. But Oliver and Garrett supported Roger. I still don't like what he has done to Jack, it's like I barely talk to Jack anymore. I don't know how my usual friends have suddenly turned so vicious, it's like they have built up so much hate, and all night they just exchanged ideas about how to get rid of the virus. It was mainly hypothetical, but some ideas seemed genuine, mostly from Roger and Jack, like leaving all the infected people in one place. Locked up. Until they died. Then we all laughed, a cold, forced laugh, with broad stretched grins. And I remember this clearly, Jack just looked into the bonfire (which has become a recurrent event) and mumbled "*Fire kills virus too.*" I think he was crying, or it was probably just the light from the fire or the smoke.

18/4 2020 – "*What the fuck happened last night?*" That is all I can think of. I remember glimpses. The primal screams of the dubstep, the flashing strobe lights (or is that my mind?) I remember clearly the first part of the night. Simone was there and we were talking like a couple almost, she had had the coronavirus, but was well again. Then Roger had offered us some shrooms, well I had the shrooms, but Simone took some pill. Roger had been eyeing me down all night, and Jack seems to have been avoiding me. And then it gets blurred. I remember the screams around the bonfire, because it was more than that - it was a chant now; we must all have been high, but something just doesn't add up. I remember looking into the flames thinking about these wild red flames curling up between the birch branches, almost perfectly shaped branches mixed with other dusty brownish oak. And that's all I can think about: those birch branches and wild flames. I haven't heard from Simone all day.

23/4 2020 – Simone has gone missing; nobody seems to know where she went after the party. I've tried to voice my concerns to the boys, but none of them want to speak to me about it. So now I have tipped the police off about the Garden, since that's where she was last seen.

24/4 2020 – The police searched the Garden so now we are all being tested for something called psilocybe mushrooms.

25/4 2020 – Everything feels cold and empty and I don't even know why I am writing anymore; everything seems so senseless anyways. The police have charged Roger and Jack for murder, they found Simone's body burned and buried behind the Garden. My test was negative. I should've never brought those masks.