

## APPENDIX\*

Rebecka Martinsson is a junior tax attorney who has left the northern Swedish city of Kiruna, and she is portrayed at a crucial stage of her career entering a party in order to meet (and hopefully impress) the partners of the firm. However, she seems disinterested and is obviously restless. While at the party, Rebecka receives a telephone call from her anguished childhood friend, Sanna, who tells her that Viktor, the local preacher and Sanna's brother, was murdered and that she, Sanna, is frightened as to what may happen. Sanna sounds desperate and implores Rebecka to help her. Rebecka immediately abandons the party to aid her friend, though it is not clear whether Rebecka is motivated purely by their friendship or the desire to discover Viktor's killer. Before she left Kiruna, Rebecka was in a relationship with Viktor, and he asked her to marry him despite an unfulfilling sexual encounter. The pull of Viktor is still strong. Rebecka refers to him at one point as "My Viktor." Sanna tells her that he was in love with Rebecka and was not the same after she left. From her own sexual experience with the young Viktor, Rebecka assumes that his sexuality was at the forefront of his demise.

Rebecka immediately returns to Kiruna, but is not welcomed back into the community and is constantly told by the Elders and others that she should leave. Rebecka quickly concludes that Sanna is innocent. She takes over the care of Sanna's two children (Sara and Lova) after Sanna is arrested and charged. The major figures are Olof (the father of Sanna and Viktor and the community patriarch), Tomas and Vesa (Church Elders), and Curt (shown as a loyal follower who dotes on Sanna). Interestingly, Curt was originally a stranger to the community, having moved from the South. It remains unclear who is the father of Sara and Lova. Curt becomes a father figure to the two children, but is not their natural father.

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\* *Solstorm* (Helsinki Filmi Oy 2007) (motion picture).

It emerges that the reason Rebecka left Kiruna was that she became pregnant by one of the Church pastors, Tomas. This occurred in breach of trust of his position as youth leader. Despite the pleading from Tomas' wife to keep the child, Rebecka had an abortion and left in shame. At one point during a church service, Tomas' wife whispers "child killer" at Rebecka.

The relationship between Rebecka and the patriarch Olof is strained, and Rebecka does not want to leave the children with their grandparents—Sanna pleaded with her not to do so. Rebecka demonstrates contempt toward Olof, most notably when she runs into him at the undertaker's. She accuses Olof of lacking love for his children. The patriarchal Olof is cold and unyielding, particularly in his treatment of Rebecka, and they have a sharp exchange when they meet unexpectedly at the Church. Olof pointedly ignores Rebecka and talks to Lova, making it clear that Rebecka is no longer part of the family.

Sanna's mother and Olof's wife, Kristina, cuts an unusual figure, clearly subservient to the dominant Olof, but not beyond silently challenging and undermining his authority. At one point, she allows Rebecka to take the children away from the grandparents' home. However, given that the police later seek to arrest Rebecka for kidnapping, one can assume Kristina did not tell Olof or the police that she permitted Rebecka to remove the children.

From the outset, Rebecka is convinced that Sanna is innocent and being used as a scapegoat by others in the community to cover up the real reason for Viktor's murder. Rebecka is convinced that the Elders disapproved of Viktor's sexuality, and that he was only tolerated to a point because of the financial gains he brought to the Church. At one point, Rebecka accuses Vesa, one of the Church pastors, of being Viktor's lover. Rebecka also believes that Sara (the older of Sanna's two children) knows something about what happened. Both the children were present at the Church in the middle of the night when Sanna "discovered" Viktor's body. Sanna cannot explain why she chose to take the children to the Church in the middle of the night.

Rebecka's only support comes from Anna Maria, the heavily pregnant police inspector who is investigating the crime. Rebecka convinces Anna Maria that there is more to the case than Sanna's involvement, and indeed one important point is the lack of any obvious motive for the killing. Anna Maria is an interesting fig-

ure, clearly sympathetic to Sanna—partly because of her own remote relationship with the Church—and to Rebecka, despite the overwhelming evidence that she has uncovered. When Sanna's flat is searched, Viktor's Bible and the knife used to stab him are found hidden in a sofa. Within a short time of Rebecka's arrival, Sanna is charged and held in custody, leaving Rebecka not only to gather evidence to demonstrate her innocence, but also to care for Sanna's two children. Anna Maria breaches the normal rules by allowing Rebecka to see the evidence she has collected in the form of Viktor's Bible, and more significantly lets her escape after she "takes" the children from Olof's home and is reported for kidnapping.

Rebecka gradually tries to unravel the mystery and find the truth about Viktor's killer, but the Elders are anxious to ensure the facts of the crime remain in the community. Rebecka tries to unearth as much evidence as possible by studying Viktor's Bible, which is given to her by Anna Maria. Rebecka is threatened with an anonymous note left on her car and the writing matches something found in Viktor's Bible. Sinisterly, Sanna's dog is killed and left for Rebecka as a warning. Despite the stranglehold the Elders exert, Rebecka uncovers what she believes to be the misappropriation of money raised through the successful sales of Viktor's books and recordings. With the aid of her employer Mans, who calls in a favor from the tax office, she uncovers tax irregularities and accuses Vesa (one of the pastors) of misappropriating income to fund his art studio. Rebecka uses her knowledge of the tax issues to put pressure on Tomas' wife, who has no knowledge of what has been done and for which she is legally liable. This, in turn, causes a rift between Tomas and his wife. Rebecka was hoping to enlist the support of the wife to lift the veil of secrecy, but she proves an unwilling ally.

The film builds towards a dramatic climax as Curt and Tomas track Rebecka to her grandfather's cottage where she fled from the police after being accused of kidnapping Sara and Lova. Meanwhile, Anna Maria, on the verge of giving birth, investigates Curt's flat and finds Viktor's severed hands. As her contractions start, Anna Maria sends her police colleagues to find Curt.

Meanwhile, Rebecka realizes, through Curt's writing, that it was Curt who sent the threatening notes to both Viktor and herself, and she forces him semi-naked into the cold outside. She re-

lents, Tomas arrives, and now Rebecka believes it is Curt who is solely responsible and that she can rely on Tomas to help her. However, it quickly becomes apparent that Tomas is involved in the whole affair—he lets Curt attack and disable Rebecka. With Rebecka wounded, Tomas seeks spiritual guidance from God. He decides the children must be killed and the cottage burned.

During the finale, Rebecka tells Curt that Sanna is having an affair with Tomas. It is not clear as to the truth of this as she is trying to unsettle Curt; she similarly tells Tomas that her aborted child was not his in an effort to distract him. Although Curt is shown as a hapless follower, at the end he gives his life to save Sara and Lova on whom he dotes. He is prepared to confront Tomas, but more than that, his original role in the murder of Viktor stemmed from both the need to protect the children and to ensure that Viktor was not condemned to hell. Rebecka attacks Tomas as she draws him closer, and she escapes from the cottage with the children—the cottage goes up in flames. Tomas is consumed by the “fires of hell.” It is only when Rebecka is released from the hospital and visits Sanna at the parents’ home that it dawns on Rebecka what actually happened. Underlying it all was the abuse of the children, which led to Sanna’s attack on Viktor and Curt severing Viktor’s hands. With her new knowledge, Rebecka says nothing and leaves with Mans.

Overall, the community is portrayed as one in fear of losing control (and by analogy, the wealth it has brought), and frightened of outsiders. The morals of the individuals are subservient to the greater good of the community. They are dedicated and committed, but flawed. Sanna kills her brother to defend her children. Curt covers up the murder to protect Sanna and the children. Interestingly, it is an outsider, Curt, who acts first to protect the children by attacking Viktor in the face of prevarication by the Church Elders. Curt also acts to save the children from Tomas. Rebecka is a confused but heroic figure who seems to be prepared to forgo her career to aid her friends and find the killer. However, it is clear from the outset that she is uncomfortable with her role as a tax lawyer, and the deeper the film digs the more we come to realize that she has escaped—but not resolved—her past.