Winter Finding Live Blot

***Hallowing***

Godi holds the ceremonial hammer and opens the circle with the traditional blessing:

In the Elhaz position standing facing North the Godi speaks:

*Hammer to the North, hold and hallow this holy stead.*

Godi faces East and speaks:

*Hammer to the East, hold and hallow this holy stead.*

Godi faces South and speaks:

*Hammer to the South, hold and hallow this holy stead.*

Godi faces West and speaks:

*Hammer to the West, hold and hallow this holy stead.*

Godi return to the North position and speaks:

*In the name of Thor we call to the ancient Gods and Goddesses – all. May this Hammer, symbol of Mjolnir and symbol of Thor, reaffirm the abundant strength and power of our Gods and of our people. I consecrate this place of community and frith, banishing from it all impure influences. May our minds in this consecrated place likewise be sanctified, as is our will to the just services of Odin, ancient god of our people. As Heimdall guards the Bifrost, may this place be warded against all forces unharmonious to our purpose here this day. Wights of the land, wherever we may be, give us your blessing this Winter Finding.*

***Sacred Fire***

The Godi lights candles

Godi speaks:

*Great Odin, we kindle the fire of cleansing and creation,*

*The first mystery and final mercy,*

*Let flame be kindled by flame,*

*That through the darkness we may come to light.*

*And may the holy flame of our people and our future,*

*Which ever burns,*

*Grow again to bathe Midgard*

*In its sacred radiance.*

***Invocation***

The Godi faces the altar and fills the ceremonial horn with mead. Holding the mead horn high with both hands the Godi recites:

*As the sun wanes*

*Giving way to Winter*

*We bid the return of Thor*

*Divine god of strength and thunder,*

*Friend and protectorate of warrior and yeoman.*

*We call to the goddess Sif, wife of Thor,*

*Emblem of earth and its rich vegetation,*

*Whose beautiful golden tresses are liken to a golden harvest.*

*Our first bread will be baked in your honor,*

*As we have gathered in the store of Midgard’s bounty,*

*With the added blessing of Frey.*

*May our crops sustain us through the wintertide.*

*As with this turn of nature’s wheel.*

*We welcome the return of Ullr.*

*TO all the Gods of Asgard*

*We give thanks to the riches*

*Bestowed to us in Midgard,*

*For the fertile soil and nourishing rain,*

*For fruit trees, nuts, grains and corn.*

*For cattle and the reward of the hunt,*

*For ample waters from spring and stream,*

*For the abundant fish in rivers and oceans,*

*For the changing seasons.*

*For the sun divine*

*Which gives life and light*

*To all living things.*

*For all these gifts we give thanks.*

*All hail the Gods of Asgard*

*And guiding spirits of the Astral realms!*

*Grant us the strength*

*The will*

*And the knowledge to ever provide*

*Life sustenance to our people*

*Here on Midgard.*

***Toast***

Godi proposes a toast:

*Nature is symbolized*

*By the Mother Goddess of Midgard.*

*Nature contains nature;*

*Nature rejoices in her own nature;*

*Nature surmounts Nature;*

*Nature cannot be amended, but by her own nature.*

*We raise a horn to the Mother Goddess of the world.*

*We raise a horn to Thor and Sif,*

*To Njord and Frey and to Bragi’s full.*

*Let us now raise a toast*

*And give praise and blessings*

*To these gods of the harvest,*

*To their life and light and to the eternal good.*

*Hail the gods of the harvest!*

All respond:

*Hail the gods of the harvest!*

Mead horn is passed around in a sunwise progression and all celebrants consume some. A small portion of what is left over is poured onto the ground for the gods and goddesses.

Godi leads procession sunwise around bonfire, chanting:

*Earth and sea – wind and rain*

*Make the fruit – make the grain;*

*Fire flame – and fire burn*

*Make the harvest – magic turn.*

When the circle is completed each celebrant leaps over the fire. Godi returns to the altar.

***First Reading***

Attendant speaks:

*Three men came out of the West*

*Their fortune to try,*

*And they swore a vow and solemn oath*

*John Barleycorn must die.*

*They took a plough and ploughed him down,*

*Threw clods upon his head,*

*And they had sworn the solemn oath,*

*John Barleycorn was dead.*

*But the cheerful spring came brightly on,*

*And showers began to fall,*

*John Barleycorn got up again,*

*And sore surprised them all.*

*The sultry suns of summer came,*

*And he grew thick and strong,*

*His head well-armed with pointed spears,*

*That no one do him wrong.*

*The sober autumn entered mild,*

*When he grew wan and pale,*

*His bending joints and drooping head,*

*Showed he began to fail,*

*They hired men with sickles sharp*

*To cut him off at the knee,*

*And the worst of all the severed Barleycorn,*

*They severed him barbarously.*

*Then they hired men with pitchforks*

*To pitch him onto the load,*

*And the worst of all the severed Barleycorn*

*They bound him down with cord*

*Then they hired men with thrashers*

*To beat him high and low,*

*They cam smick-smack on poor Jack’s back,*

*Till the flesh began to flow.*

*O, they put him in a maltin’ kiln,*

*Thinking to dry his bones,*

*And the worst of all, they severed Barleycorn,*

*They crushed him between two stones.*

*Then they put him in the mashing-tub,*

*Thinking to scald his tail,*

*And the next thing they called Barleycorn,*

*They called him home-brewed ale.*

*John Barleycorn was a hero bold,*

*Of noble enterprise,*

*For if you do but taste his blood,*

*‘Twill make your courage rise.*

*He’ll make a maid dance around the room,*

*As naked as she was born,*

*He’ll make a parson pawn his books,*

*And farmer burn his corn.*

*The whole world over worship him,*

*No matter friend or foe,*

*And where they be that make so free,*

*He’s sure to lay them low.*

*So, put your wine in glasses fine,*

*And cider in the can,*

*Put Barleycorn in the old brown jug,*

*For he’s proved the strongest man!*

***Second Reading***

Second Attendant speaks:

*Long bitter winters imposed a seasonal rhythm on the life of our ancestors. For almost six months of every year they had to contend with deep snow and freezing cold o0n land and foul, icy weather at sea. Farming and maritime activity ceased and the men turned to trapping and hunting, and to the building and repairing of their ships. The winter months could prove fatal to those unprepared. Men and women had to rely on their wits and wisdom to survive.*

*Winter Finding is celebrated each year at the time of the Autumnal Equinox on September 20th -21st. As the days become shorter and nights become longer, it is a time for gathering up the summer harvest and preparing for the winter months ahead. This day is always marked with much joy, kinship and feasting. An old ritual after each harvest gathering was to leave a few ears of corn standing in the field. This was to show that the farmer had not exhausted the strength of the crop. Also, it was considered to be an offering for Odin’s horses.*

*On the evening of the day that the last crop had been brought in, the farmer and his family would traditionally provide a great feast for the reapers, usually served in the barn which was specially decorated. It was the memory of this long practiced tradition that the pilgrim fathers carried with them from Europe to America and naming it “Thanksgiving Day.” The exact traditional day of Thanksgiving was not officially established until 1864 when President Lincoln set aside the fourth Thursday of November as the appointed day. Thanksgiving is a statutory holiday in Canada, celebrated on the second Monday in October.*

*According to mythological accounts. Frey was son of Njord and brother of Freya. He had great personal beauty in addition to his divine powers. He rules over rain and sunshine and the produce of the earth, and it is good to call on him for peace and plenty. He, also, has power over the prosperity of men. Winter Finding is considered a holiday of major importance, second only to Yule and Midsummer.*

*Symbolically the harvest season is the most appropriate time for a God to die. Odin in the virile disguise of the Green Man ripens to a glorious golden figure known as Barleycorn of Autumn. Hence the tale of John Barleycorn is a traditional favorite at Winter Finding Celebrations.*

***Third Reading***

First or Third Attendant speaks:

*Winter and Summer Odin*

*In the temple of Asgard stood a great golden statue of Odin. When Frigga was preparing to give a speech before the Gods, she spread out her best jewels to decide what to wear for the event. Not pleased with her choices, Frigga’s handmaiden and confident Fulla slyly convinced her to have a worthy necklace made out of some of the gold from Odin’s statue. Skillful artificers were bribed to perform the deed. When Odin entered the temple his keen eye quickly spotted the missing gold. In a rage he raised Gungnir, his spear, ready to fling it at whoever had committed the evil deed. But his love for Frigga triumphed over all else; he determined another punishment.*

*He withdrew form Gods and men; he disappeared into distant regions, and with him went every blessing from heaven and earth. A false Odin took his place, who let lose the storms of winter and the ice giants over field and meadow. Every green leaf withered, thick clouds hid the golden sun and the light of the moon and stars; the earth, lakes and rivers were frozen by the raging cold, which threatened to destroy all forms of life. Every creature longed for the return of the god of blessing, and at length he came back. Thunder and lightning made known his approach. The usurper fled before the true Odin; shrubs and herbs of all kinds sprouted anew over the face of Midgard, which was now made young again by the warmth of Spring.*

***Praise and Thanksgiving***

Godi speaks:

*The light grows weaker*

*The ground is dark beneath out feet*

*The veil between the worlds is thin*

*As our ancestors before us*

*We prepare ourselves*

*For the harsh season ahead.*

*Great lives are lived*

*From patterns of great convictions.*

*Our daily conduct*

*Is based upon our convictions.*

*Our inward ethics*

*Have their source in our convictions.*

*Our Gods, time, space and the great laws –*

*These are what bind our universe together.*

*We stand before our Gods,*

*As our ancestors have stood before our Gods,*

*With boldness of spirit*

*And unwavering perseverance*

*In all life’s challenges.*

*Our family, hearth and home,*

*And the unity that binds our people*

*We covet above all earthly things.*

*Gods of Asgard –*

*We give praise and thanks to thee*

*And perform this festive blót in your honor.*

*Hail the Gods,*

*Hail the Folk,*

*And hail to the harvest good!*

***Closing***

Godi faces altar and rings bell three times in five second intervals.

Godi speaks:

Spirits of Asgard we thank you for your presence here in this circle. We ask for your blessing and while you depart to your noble realm we bid you hail and farewell. I hereby release any Spirits that may have been imprisoned by this ceremony. Depart now in peace to your abodes and habitations. The blót is now ended.