## Viliam Klimáček

# **HIPPOCAMPUS**

or THE LONESOME

Opera libretto.

### Characters:

EVA The LONESOME, later MERMAID

HIPPOCAMPUS tatooed SEA HORSE

FRIDGE later MALE NURSE

MIRROR later MOLLY WARDROBE later PEGGY

CHORUS three voices that comment, later two of them play DOCTOR and NURSE

**Scene** – the neutral, plain space is dominated by a large, spacious pink sofa made of leather resembling human skin. The sofa hovers some 3 meters above the stage, representing Eva's skin. A tatooed Hippocampus often sits on the sofa.

**Costumes** - Eva wears her old-fashioned dress, Molly and Peggy keep up with the recent fashion trends. The fridge wears a long white overcoat with inner pockets packed with a bottle of gin, vegetables, tins – ad libitum. The mirror has a flashy glittery reflex costume, Wardrobe is a singer crammed into an incredible number of pieces of clothing: dresses, blouses, bras, scarves, skirts, ... as many as she can bear.

### Situation No. 1

EVA I'm just happy happy today

like when I first came

to an IKEA department store every thing there had a name every table bed and mirror even a glass or shower screen.

CHORUS Gunghult Branas Fagelbö Leksvik Klippan

Skruvsta Ivar Benno Alve Skärpt

EVA It was then that I told to myself

you want to be nice to your things because some one living alone

can talk heart-to-heart

only with them

- any snack for us to snap, Arthur?

FRIDGE Yesterday's potatoes - just warm them up

EVA I'll make some beef to go with it

MIRROR Too heavy a meal for so late at night

in a week you put on a few pounds

WARDROBE You'll never fit in the blue skirt again

EVA Leave me alone

MIRROR But Eve, Eve, we're your best friends

FRIDGE Arthur

WARDROBE Karin

MIRROR Sisi

I'm sorry to say this

but there is a pimple on your cheek

FRIDGE Seems you're using chilli too much

MIRROR There's a pimple bigger than Everest

mirrors don't lie ever

EVE acne acne- where to find cheer?

FRIDGE Gin, it's gin

pure and crystal clear

EVE Thank you Arthur

you dear faithful fridge

it's gin that heals and turns hopeless into heroes

CHORUS It's the day of arrival. Of him who never knocks

and makes himself heard through nothing but touch

FRIDGE Your midnight visitor is sure to be back

EVE I rejoice but also worry

that he'll turn up and never come again

just fetch me that gin

it's been a year since in IKEA I saw the aquarium of immensity

MIRROR What was it's name?

EVE Hellö it was called Hellö

and it had a sea horse swimming inside

CHORUS Hippocampus Hippocampus

EVE hanging in the water as a question mark

there he was coiling and huddling

like I'm in my sleep

like I - a question mark in blankets

two question marks in search of meaning

floating abandoned

in waters in blankets in life all confused I just rushed out

FRIDGE And then you had him tatooed

(As Eva rolls up her sleeve, Hippocampus sits down on the sofa)

CHORUS Hippocampus Hippocampus there

on Eva's skin

EVE Right outside IKEA a chap with dreads

was making henna pictures esoteric marks to student girls

and for men a few swear words from Chinese that look so sex-appealing when on a skin

MIRROR Want something to remember Miss?

WARDROBE He asked and you answered -

FRIDGE I want a needle tatoo - something that would last

MIRROR He just laughed and brought you in

into his caravan

WARDROBE And burnt an image into your skin

FRIDGE And there you stood in awe

unable to tell: a question mark or a sea horse?

MIRROR A glowing needle pouring pigment in

that must have been painful

FRIDGE You lost your mind my dear

you could have caught AIDS or hepatitis

CHORUS No disinfection can save you from desire

WARDROBE So you just kept sitting there charmed like a teen

seeing horses making love first time

FRIDGE It wasn't in your power to run away

you did not want to run away

WARDROBE But then the pain prevailed

MIRROR And you rushed out into the street

EVE That's why my horse stays unfinished

mouthless is the mark that can't question

My charming skin my private territory my pink trampoline

my gaping wound open to your salt

just craves to be filled up

(Hippocampus moves across the sofa)

Sometimes your mouthless face sits on my arm

sometimes my back or knee harbour him

then my hair hides it like deep forest and Mons Veneris offers the best vista

Just show up and shout wherever you are

CHORUS Travelling tatoo - mystery unheard of in dermatology

could make Eve famous in medical magazines

EVE My charming skin

my private territory my pink trampoline

my gaping wound open to your salt

just craves to be filled up

### Situation No. 2

A clock tolls midnight.

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings only the tune, "mouthless")

MIRROR Incredible - the tatoo comes to life

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings the tune)

FRIDGE Poor Eve - fell in love with her own skin

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings)

MIRROR Once upon a time a woman fell in love

with her woolen sweater

WARDROBE How did it all end up?

MIRROR A tragedy - moth eaten

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings)

EVE I want to have the power

to embrace man's shadow

to make him feel my distant arms
I want to stay under shelter
and listen to the sound of rain
I want that sound to make me wet
and feed on a clatter of forks

and get some tan from a picture of the sun

get drunk from letters of the word WINE I want

I want to be in and out at once.

CHORUS To be in but out in fact

caressing at a discreet distance

(Hippocampus moves across the sofa)

EVE You wander across the skin as I do around my flat

I get my supper from Arthur, and my dress from Karin but then Sisi gives me the pain of self reflection midnight tolls and I beg you don't make me wait

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings the tune with his mouth tight shut)

EVE You nasty sleazy hoary

charming sweet gracious horse what is it you want to say?

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings the tune)

EVE ("interpreting") Will you come to me another forty nights

without a single touch that I could enjoy?

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings the tune)

EVE Forty nights that we'll make love

only by looking?

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings the tune)

EVE But then will you descend from my skin

and stay human for ever?

CHORUS But you cannot touch him

just watch from a distance gently

EVE Pervaded

with each other CHORUS They will last

forever

EVE One

in the other CHORUS At such a fine

distance

EVE Skin

on the skin CHORUS The two

will become one

EVE Joined

together CHORUS they are in

and out at once

CHORUS forty days like that for heavens' sake - we'll see

EVE Just tell me what is it you dream of most often?

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings the tune that gets simultaneous "interpretation")

FRIDGE (speaks) This aria celebrates life in the ocean

delicate taste of the seas and iodine smell.

MIRROR (speaks) The little horse sings about the times

when his reflection used to shine in the eyes of amazed fish

WARDROBE (speaks) The dark beats illustrate

a fishing net and the way he got caught here he is counting down his last minute

FRIDGE (speaks) But the cheering tune of brass

calls out Gudrun - captain's daughter of five years she, she simply puts the horse into a canned-fruit glass

WARDROBE (speaks) He is rescued saved

MIRROR (speaks) Yes, but only till the captain bargains him back

for Gunghult the rocking chair

- and the bass clarinet in the finale stands for aquarium Hello of the IKEA department store

FRIDGE Time is up

MIRROR Time is up

CHORUS The little horse must leave so that he may return

(Hippocampus returns back onto the sofa)

Hippocampus Hippocampus

EVE How shall I survive a day without him

FRIDGE Gin crystal clear chilly gin

MIRROR Once again she'll get puffed up

drunk and stinky her make-up smeared all over

FRIDGE She who can't swim

must drink up (Eva takes gin out of the fridge and drinks)

EVE My watch

is drunk MIRROR Across the gorgeous

skin

EVE A run of wild

seconds WARDROBE Across private

territory

EVE They gallop

and stamp FRIDGE All over pink

trampoline

EVE Time crazed

head over heels MIRROR Fresh wounds

open up

EVE Riding high

the drunken horse WARDROBE The wounds

ready for your salt

FRIDGE Eve, you've just got a message here.

Situation No. 3

CHORUS I am your mail

Reply? Delete? Send?

EVE Must be some spam again

who would ever mail to me?

CHORUS Dear classmate

it's been ten years since we got out of school

so if you care to refresh some of the hype of our youth

just turn up in the oldie club- Molly and Peggy

EVE For ages they haven't dropped a word

back then they made me the mickie of the school

and now want to meet out of blue

CHORUS Reply? Delete? Send?

EVE Molly and Peggy

the worst beasts in our class always enjoying others' bad luck

CHORUS Reply? Delete? Send?

EVE They'll be surprised, gulping beer

when I and the horse arrrive beautiful couple full of fire our hair will set the club aflame as the sun can do to a hollow tree through a piece of beer bottle.

CHORUS Reply? Delete? Send?

EVE Once some one grabbed my knee

who knows who it was

Peggy or Molly? that's ages back

CHORUS Reply? Delete? Send?

EVE Reply!

of course I'll come wow but what to put on

CHORUS Hippocampus Hippocampus

WARDROBE Don't worry, he'll lift your self-confidence

MIRROR And the confidence will help your charm

EVE Your glowing hair with set the club aflame

and the outcast will come back beloved

CHORUS The outcast will come back beloved

oh Eva oh Eva

Situation No. 4

FRIDGE I'm just an old fridge

ammonia flows in my veins

holding eggs and gin I stay a discrete witness and friend of loneliness

Twenty five years I've lived here with Eve

I was bought when she was born but the girl was brought up by a father

# too busy too often he used to leave her alone workaholic doctor (*music stops*)

And it was just him who, some fifteen years ago, supported my body with (speech) a neurology textbook as he wanted me to stop humming. Willy-nilly, I have learned a lot about the structure of the brain and the mind and, therefore, let me explain – just in kitchen English - what's wrong with Eva. It's her limbical system that is to blame! Can we see the first image? (image of human brain) The limbical system is a network of neural cords interconnecting all different parts of brain. This system is responsible for our memory, as well as sexual and social behaviour. And, to say the least, Eva's social behaviour is not quite all right. Why did she have this strange sea horse tatooed? (image of the sea horse) In Latin, it's called Hippocampus hippocampus. And, in fact, doesn't this creature have his tail coiled exactly like the part of the brain that harbours key bits of limbical system? And, isn't this part of the brain, belonging to a limbical system, by any chance also called Hippocampus? Yes, it is! Hippocampus – the sea horse appeared on Eva's skin exactly at the time when Hippocampus in her brain stopped functioning! In poetic terms – the horse swam out of the IKEA aquarium through Eva's skin all the way to her brain and there, instead of mending a problem in her limbical system, he shattered her social integrity! Eureka! (image of brain with the horse) The question is what to do to make the horse leave the brain again. A textbook of psychiatry or a handbook of neurochirurgy would come in quite handy now. They, however, have never put any of those under me. Simply because I stopped humming. And here comes an end to my kitchen extempore. Now let the music play! (we hear the orchestra playing, Fridge is singing again)

> I'm just an old fridge ammonia flows in my veins holding eggs and gin I stay a discrete witness and friend of loneliness

### Situation No. 5

Orchestral "disco" playing. Singers shout one over another.

PEGGY You look great Molly

MOLLY Sorry? I can't hear you

PEGGY I mean you look great

MOLLY You are the same, too- Peggy

PEGGY What am I?

MOLLY Still the same – beast

PEGGY Is this real or a wig?

MOLLY Who wears real hair these days? (Eva enters)

PEGGY Poor Eve all zombie

MOLLY her dress Salvation Army piece

EVE feels like some rubber hammers

beat me from all angles

PEGGY You look great Eve

MOLLY Superb dress - you made it yourself?

EVE Here you come mocking me again

lend me your lipstick Molly

MOLLY What do you mean

EVE I want you to lend me your lipstick

MOLLY What are you saying?

PEGGY She wants your lipstick – you deaf or what?

Let's go to toilets to speak (music goes down in volume)

MOLLY I and Peggy

PEGGY Molly and me

MOLLY+PEGGY The other day we saw a woman in the street

walking without a left shoe

from behind she looked exactly like you when we caught up with her we saw

an old homeless geek

how's life what's up with you - speak

EVE My life is just – normal

MOLLY+PEGGY Something's going on that's clear

you skin is pure beauty Eve

no lotion would ever do such a thing only love can moisten like this

you must be in love who is it do we know him? – speak

EVE My life is just – normal

so you just give me a break, leave me alone (clock tolls midnight)

MOLLY+PEGGY Take your pee and catch up with us in the bar bye

EVE I'll just finish what a needle

did not do

I'll give a mouth to you

(she paints with lipstick on her skin, Hippocampus, sitting on the

sofa, runs a lipstick across his lips)

HIPPOCAMPUS A mouth that lets wind in

that sends out words and kisses beautiful live mouth is now mine

CHORUS Beautiful live mouth

EVE I missed you you little nasty

you cruel beast charming beloved

and sweet – come dance with me (they dance)

CHORUS Love and dance – motions funny the same

EVE Caress rub and wear me to the bone

let vour saliva coat me all over

MOLLY Who's she speaking to in that tone?

PEGGY She's turning as if some unseen lover

was softly holding her

HIPPOCAMPUS Your beautiful skin

EVE Is all filled with your self

HIPOCAMPUS Your private country

EVE Is all settled

HIPPOCAMPUS Your pink trampoline

EVE Reflects kisses

HIPPOCAMPUS Your open wound

EVE Is now filled up with salt

EVE+HIPPOCAMPUS Caress rub and wear me to the bone

let your saliva coat me all over

EVE So far it was just sea water you've been able to drink

why don't we now have some gin?

HIPPOCAMPUS From you I'll take anything

EVE Waiter can you get two glasses of gin for us

so Arthur what are you doing here in the club?

FRIDGE How do you know we are in a club?

You may've never gone out of the house maybe you're dancing only in your head

EVE Makes no difference to me

just make it two, you know what I mean

FRIDGE What you see – no one else can see

what others see – you're not able to see now imagine yourself looking through

Peggy and Molly's eyes

right now

(Hippocampus returns onto the sofa)

MOLLY Did you see how long is Eva's pointing finger?

PEGGY You mean the right hand one?

MOLLY Women that do good to themselves

tend to have a longer pointing finger - therefore

it's called a Finger of Mercy

PEGGY If I get what you mean

your finger should stretch all the way to the ground, Molly

MOLLY You're wrong my dear, I am left-handed

and left-handed people are more intelligent

and what's more, I've been living with John for half a year

PEGGY You mean that footballer?

You call that intelligent? You behave like a sad square Why's Eve staring at us that way?

MOLLY If looks could kill

FRIDGE And now look through your own eyes

just use Eva's eyes to see

what others see – you're not able to see what you see – no one else can see

- now

(music gets repeated, Hippocampus descends from the sofa, and

kisses Molly and Peggy who show no reaction)

MOLLY Did you see how long is Eva's pointing finger?

PEGGY On her right hand you mean?

HIPPOCAMPUS Just fondle me

MOLLY Women that do good to themselves

tend to have a longer pointing finger - therefore

it's called a Finger of Mercy

HIPPOCAMPUS Rub and caress me

PEGGY If I get what you mean

your finger should stretch all the way to the ground - Molly

HIPPOCAMPUS Wear me to the bone

MOLLY You're wrong my dear, I am left-handed

and left-handed people are more intelligent

and what's more, I've been living with John for half a year

HIPPOCAMPUS Let your saliva coat me all over

PEGGY You mean that footballer?

You behave like a sad square why's Eve staring at us that way?

MOLLY If look could kill

PEGGY You remember how badly did she once

cut herself with her father's razor?
She insisted she was not bleeding because there was a ghostly presence

sucking it all away

MOLLY Of blood there was not the smallest trace

I recall it all too well

but now we'd rather move to another place

I shall introduce you to John

PEGGY I trust there'll be many a football player – darling! (they leave)

HIPPOCAMPUS Full of fire and sweet water is the charming mouth I have

(he returns to the leather sofa)

CHORUS what others see – you're not able to

what you see – no one else can

EVE It's all deserted

my charming skin my private country has no one in my pink trampoline

reflects no kisses my gaping wound

has been filled with sugar

(Chorus leaves, two members change into Nurse and Doctor)

### Situation No. 6

FRIDGE Gin – chilly clear gin? (Eva drinks)

EVE I'll sandpaper my skin

and burn the tatoo with an iron

FRIDGE Gin – chilly clear gin (Eva drinks)

EVE I must kill that image, kill, get rid of him

FRIDGE Gin – chilly clear gin (Eva drinks)

HIPPOCAMPUS I miss you Eve

why don't you talk to me?

EVE Just keep quiet or I'll take your mouth back

HIPPOCAMPUS I can't see what you saw

I can't see what's wrong

(As Eva cleans the lipstick off her skin, Hippocampus cleans his

lips)

EVE He can't see what happened

he doesn't understand

he was kissing those women in front of my face

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings the tune)

FRIDGE He says you are unfair to him

what you saw never happened

EVE He was touching them I know that well

he broke the promise forty days – ha ha ha he touched so forever he'll have to stay in jail of the skin – just fetch me the gin (Eva drinks)

FRIDGE It's time to quit that stuff

EVE I've never lived with a man it may be better he's gone

who knows how it would all work out

he would surely forget to take down a toilet seat wash my favourite coffee mugs smelly socks below the bed what else could I expect

A deceived woman is like a well of oil that gushes out black bitterness burns out burns burns all inside all men to hell to hell with those bastards what else could I expect

They only think with their tail, donors of orgasms, they would screw your best friend in a lift as she leaves your place and then ring your bell having just relaxed the underwear they pass a sweaty bouquet what did I expect

FRIDGE It was a sea horse, Eva

not a man

EVE A horse or a man – a man or a horse

let us just call it a loss pain cheating or harm treason vanity or wound

FRIDGE It's much easier to love an image

that a living man

EVE Just shut up or I'll pull the plug

FRIDGE To love an image

is much easier than to love a living man

much much easier -

(Eva unplugs the Fridge, Fridge leaves. Eva is drunk, hardly

articulates, the rhythm gets uneven)

EVE My father used to enjoy this razor

clean-shaven and smelling nice he went to see his patients

he wanted me to become a violinist it didn 't work out as many other things

now I'll just fiddle with the razor like with a bow

turning my body into a violin

as I'll play my self

I'll cut the image on my skin like some do haunted by Mona Lisa poor madmen killers of beauty

(slowly she cuts with the razor into her skin, Hippocampus on the

sofa twists and turns, avoiding the knife)

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings about fear, frightened to die)

EVE The subtlest of music

a bow barely touches the strings

but they quiver

(she drops down to the ground, then stands up again)

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings - begging for life)

EVE No I will not leave like that

I must say good-bye to the dearest first

good-bye Arthur good-bye Karin Sisi - I'm going (she drops down to the ground, then stands up again)

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings out his pain)

EVE My father took me to the opera one day

a woman was dying there on the stage but kept singing till the end - incredible

I believed singers surely have

seventy liters of blood if they manage

to bleed so much and still sing - I was just a little girl (she drops down to the ground, then stands up again)

HIPPOCAMPUS (sings with disappearing strength, at peace with death)

EVE Sometimes I see myself in a dream

walking inside me

I am an immense store full of furniture All inside me I have a thousand kitchens thousand double beds and thousand rooms

but still can't choose

the one right one I truly live in

(she drops and stands up. Hippocampus does not move.)

Seventy liters of blood

ha ha ha ha ha

girlies can believe anything even that they'll grow up

get married and live happily

and

(she drops down, but stands up no more, Hippocampus on the sofa

does not move either)

### Situation No. 7

MALE NURSE Neighours phoned

she hadn't been out for three weeks

FEMALE DOCTOR What a tranquil beauty

- not a single drop of blood

(they cover Eva with some plastic sheet, the sofa also gets covered

with plastic curtain)

I used to know her father

(Male nurse carries Eva away)

Always in a hurry

always talking about his little girl

Always in a hurry

always talking about his little girl

(Nurse comes back)

NURSE She ruined her tatoo

I could never do that to mine

(he rolls up his sleeve - the sofa gets uncovered too. There is a Mermaid sitting there)

How do you like her - doctor?

## FEMALE DOCTOR I couldn't tell her from real (they leave)

MERMAID Rush and hurry up Arthur

we'll take a bath together in warm and pleasant water and we'll wash and wash your charming skin your private land your pink trampoline

All the way to death your gaping open wound will get replenished with love

my salt

**FINITO**