

THE GIRL FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

/a monodrama/

(homage to Chiyuki Sakagami)

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LEA: As an adult

As a child

As her own mother

As a glider pilot

As her own doctor

/Lea is standing but is rather shaky on her feet and has to struggle to keep her balance. On the edge of the stage, on a tightrope, on the beam, on a steep slope.... Now, though, she is standing calmly, firmly on her own two feet. She is wearing no make-up. Through her long white shirt, spattered with blue paint, we can see her body. She looks intently into the eyes of her audience/.

LEA: “My life began in the Precambrian sea 5. 9 billion years ago... Prehistoric fish taught me how to survive in water and so I went to live with them in the depths of the ocean.... Human beings have a weapon which we call language.... I learnt a very way of greeting people – squeeze the other person in your arms then kiss them.” (citation of the mentally ill japanesse painter Chiyuki Sakagami).

/Lea comes down from the stage into the audience. She hugs some of them, pressing her forehead against theirs. Slowly, like with rope made from sharp blades of grass or seaweed, she draws the attention of the audience to herself and her story. Again she goes back on stage/.

LEA: I send kisses to you all.

/She leans forward, sending air kisses. From above balloons of various sizes fall onto the stage/.

LEA: When I was in the depths of the ocean there was space inside me. Do you have any space inside you? The size of a Kinder egg, perhaps. But empty. There mustn't be anything there. In that nothingness, in that emptiness, that is where you are, you see. The essence of

you. Psst! Let me give you some advice.... Keep inside you such a place. An empty place of absolute silence. The very centre of your being. Otherwise you will get lost. Lose your way! Like a child in a dark forest. Psst! And it may take you ages to find your way again. And it will hurt. You might burn yourself. People will bite pieces from you like from a bar of chocolate. Pst! Only you can hear this. You who are looking at me. Who are listening. I can feel your breath. You are so silent. So calm. So forgotten. So lost. I will dance for you if you want... I'll be like a creature from the depths of the ocean. /she whispers conspiratorially/
Each of you should dance for at least a few minutes every day. Did you know that?

/Lea, now between the balloons, dances a strange dance, comically imitating the movements of fish, penguins, walruses... She takes one of the balloons and starts painting it. Eyes, eyebrows... she paints a big mouth with lipstick. From now on this balloon will be her mother/.

LEA: One day, with her very long arm, Mummy dragged me out from amongst the fish. From the bottom of the sea. Only *she* thought she was pushing me out from her bloody belly and from between her outspread thighs. Something slippery and warm and bloody, crying softly. Then she leaves this mass of slime, meat and blood to just lie there. She pushes once more, as if she had another child in her belly. This time, though, it is only the placenta that comes out. Now Mummy hesitates for a moment. She wants to leave everything there and disappear from the place. This is the moment, after all, when women go crazy, isn't it? But instead she turns on her elbows and bottom towards the phone. She dials a number. At the same time she looks at that thick wrinkled grey-blue cord. It is still joining her to the child. Now she can see that at the end of it there is a little girl. And that she has actually started breathing, is even bawling. In fact she is crying. Because with every cell she can feel that she has left the peacefulness of

the sea. Mummy waits to see what next. Perhaps the crying will stop. Her nerves are rent. If the worst comes to the worst, she will tell the doctor the birth happened very quickly. All over in a flash.

I am not angry with you, Mummy. I suppose you just didn't have that clean, empty place in you anymore. You let yourself be cannibalized. Your life was eaten up. Like bitter chocolate. A fool amongst fools! As stupid as me! If the white moon was to fall from the sky at night like some stupid burst balloon, there would also be this black black darkness. Like in you then. But later.....when the circus came to our town..., Mummy, do you remember? You bought me a fabulous white balloon.

LEA-child: I hold the balloon on a long string and walk proudly. My back is straight. Just like the rider on the black horse who galloped through the town advertising the circus. She was throwing out confetti, false banknotes and shouting: “ Would you like to see things you have never seen before? Feel the gooseflesh on your back? See creatures no human has seen for centuries? The mustachioed woman? The snake girl, with absolutely no bones? Siamese twins doing a striptease? The tamer who puts his head into the mouth of the tiger? Lions jumping through fiery hoops? The knife-swallower? Bears riding bicycles? The clown in love with the moustache woman? All the wonders of the world? Do you want to laugh until your belly aches? Roll up! Roll up..! Children and pensioners half-price! We start this evening! Only one evening of laughter and terror.” I go with Mummy to that evening of laughter and terror. Proudly. With a white balloon in my hand.

/Lea holds a painted balloon in front of her face. Her voice changes when she is her mother or someone else in her imagination/.

LEA-mother: What are you looking like that for?! Do you want some candy floss?

LEA-child: Yes.

LEA-mother: Yellow?

LEA-child: Pink.

LEA-mother: I'll buy you some yellow. Like my hair. Just like honey, isn't it?

LEA-child: But I want pink. P-i-i-ink!

LEA-mother: How dare you stamp your feet like that! You don't deserve anything, you little minx!

LEA: How sweet that candy floss smelled! And the Turkish delight. And the baked sausages and lemonade. How the wasps buzzed! Buzzing around so much that I envied them. The men tried to swat them with newspapers and the women with their handbags but it was useless.

The wasps kept coming back to lick their ice-cream. Or to land on their candy-floss. Or on the rims of glasses full of beer or sticky lemonade. Tightrope walkers passed over our heads. The rope was tied to the church tower and to another building. People were tittering. In that enormous building sat the district committee. All the party functionaries were in there. And people would say to them: "You big shots! You power mongers!" Perhaps they were secretly watching through the frilly curtains the clowns walking along the rope above the square.

"This is just bourgeois entertainment! It will surely die out and there will be other kinds," they would have said unctuously to their secretaries, women with French lacquer on their nails, bought on the sly, under the counter. A service for which the shop assistant would be granted permission to travel abroad. From the big shots, themselves. The power mongers! Bzzzzzz....

LEA-mother: Wasps exist in order to sting cheeky little girls. They fly into their mouths, sting them on the tongue and then the cheeky girls choke to death.

LEA-child: But I've got my mouth closed tightly.

LEA-mother: That's the best thing you can do. Just keep quiet!

LEA: I learnt that the gate to the silent spaces creaks. I learnt that if you once enter the room of silence, you never feel like coming out. Pst! Let them hear me! You, too, be as quiet as the foam on the sea... Then...in the big top, you could smell sawdust, and the dung and urine of those brainwashed animals who didn't behave like animals. They were imitating people. Were even dressed like people. The perfume of poodle tamers, acrobats and horseriders in sequinned white trousers – and bras - filled the air. A brassband was playing.

LEA-child: Now! Here she is! Something scaly. The snake-woman! Something from the sea. Where I used to live. She stands on the dais and is starting to twist. She's got no bones. Now her head is between her knees. She is looking at me. Green eyes. Pelagic. Salty. Cold. Painted black. Glistening. Glassy. She is smiling at me like a conspirator. She is moving her lips. Is she trying to tell me something? A message just for me? I open my mouth, too. There are no wasps here. Nothing to sting my tongue. That snake-woman might go, though! Disappear from my life. And I couldn't understand her. But no! She had to come back a second time. To show me what lay ahead.

Lea goes to stand in front of a board in which knives have been thrown, the outline of which define her figure.

LEA-child: That woman from the sea..., she has denied that she comes from the sea, after all. Has come back in a glitzy dress down to her knees. Bare shoulders. Red high-heels. Muscular calves. Like a boy's. She is even wearing a necklace. The kind all women make. They cut up newspaper into little squares. Then they roll them up into little balls, cover them in lacquer and thread them. I learnt some letters from reading Mummy's newspaper beads. She often used to make them. She said that women in the West have got it made. They buy real jewels for themselves. Gold chains. What the hell do they know about women here? Behind the Iron

Curtain. About how resourceful they are! Why she herself can sew skirt suits from decorative fabric, blouses from curtains... That woman is still standing still. Thank goodness she has such fearless glassy eyes. The man standing opposite her is swinging a knife blade in his hand. Then he hurls it. There is a terrible silence. When the knife enters the wood, you can hear the whole tent gasp. As if from one enormous mouth. A game with flesh and blood. A game with a woman. She is still looking into the distance. Something is happening there which only she can see. I don't know why that man is playing such a game, though. Why can't she throw some of the knives, too? What about the last knife? Will he throw it into her heart? Will he then pull out her pierced heart and show it to the audience? Oh gosh! I'm wetting myself, I am so afraid! I can already see the heart! Still beating at the end of the knife. So much blood!

LEA-mother: Ugh! What a disgrace! A big girl like you and you can't hold it in!

LEA: In the bus my mother's anger subsided.

LEA-mother: What did you get so carried away for! Those knives were all blunt anyway! In the caravan they use them for cutting up tripe to put in their bean soup.

LEA-child: You can't cut tripe with a blunt knife. You can't cut anything with a blunt knife.

LEA-mother: Have your stockings dried yet? At home you'll wash them yourself!

LEA: Pst! Take my advice, never enter a place defined by knives. If someone tries to bully you there, just don't let them! Fight back! Kick! Pull their hair! Scratch like a cat. Don't let them carve you up or pin you like a butterfly! Don't let yourself be eaten up by people wielding knives in their hands! Don't just stand there! Defend yourself! Fight for your life!

Lea sketches a woman's face on another white balloon.

LEA: There was one here not long ago who looked just like a timid schoolgirl. As if she needed help herself. She kept sucking in her lips. It was so funny. Then she ran her hands through her hair, smiled, looked at me intently. I can remember her very first sentence.

LEA-doctor: I will believe everything you tell me.

LEA: Me - And what has happened to doctor number 3? 4? Or 5? That one who claimed those tranquilizers were amazing. Who poured them down my throat as if I was a huge egg-timer? First I put on ten kilos then I lost twenty. I put on weight, then I lose it... just keep going round in circles...

LEA-doctor: But you've made good progress. This course of treatment takes a long time. The doctor must have told you that.

LEA: He gave me bad marks. I wasn't even allowed to leave my room. That was my punishment. The others, with good marks, could go to the park. To sweep up leaves. But I would have jumped over the bench. Like a cat. Because I'm a bit touched, aren't I? The others can lean their broom against a tree, jump over the bench, lie in the grass... Just stare at the sky. At the blue of the upside-down sea. Or at the raindrops if it was pouring. But not me.

LEA-doctor: Your previous doctor has told me the history of your illness. He wants me to try to help you. Do your new pills disagree with you? Apparently you hide them under your tongue. Then spit them onto your pictures. I've seen them. Such strange pictures. Do they have anything to do with your body?

LEA: Yes. Dancing, too. That's also to do with my body. Any moment it can dissolve, you see. Or disintegrate. Like a jigsaw puzzle.

LEA-doctor: Why do you think so?

LEA: Because bodies are fragile. Why do people think bodies are separable from the rest of the world? From our murdered society?

LEA-doctor: You like the colour blue. But also newspaper cuttings and chocolate wrappers...

LEA: Mmmmm! Chocolate! Why don't they give us more?! I also put thread on my pictures. I secretly pull it from the ends of my shirt. I also stick sand, flowers and leaves on to the paper. I make the body from the bones left over after lunch. The skin from toothpaste and crusts of bread...

LEA-doctor: Nobody's stopping you. But what about the tablets? We'll get nowhere without them. Your previous doctor...

LEA: Previous doctor! He found out damn all about me. He sat in front of me like a Buddha made of stone, his face a blank. He said I was always making things up, that I wasn't cooperating. The two-faced liar! I would like to see what he has got in his trousers.

LEA-doctor: Try to realize that doctors can also get disappointed. He was on your side.

LEA: me – Oh no he wasn't! He was just stuck in chemical formulae. For whatever condition. A chemical formula of medicine for whatever kind of patient. He would never ask me to dance. I love dancing, you know.

LEA-doctor: Dancing is beautiful.

LEA: Would you come dancing with me?

LEA-doctor: Dancing and painting are both good therapy.

Lea strokes and kisses the balloon of the doctor.

LEA: Come on then! Embrace me. Sweetly. Let's dance! Let's dance without arms and legs. Let's dance inside. Like fish. Dancing is deep. It's strong. I feel safe when I dance. When I dance I feel alive. Come to me.

LEA-doctor: No, not me. But if you want to, you can dance.

LEA: me – It's all rot! Dance! Paint! Do what you want. Just swallow your medicine, you mean! There is a black hole within me. I am dead mud.

LEA-doctor: You are in a bad mood today! How did you sleep?

LEA: me- I am always asleep. I sleep all the time. I keep telling people. I keep complaining that those drugs have deadened me. I'm half-witted.

LEA-doctor: Who gave you such a lovely name? Lea.

LEA: me – Do you like it?

LEA-doctor: It is so light.

LEA:-me - What do you mean, light? That it doesn't tax your brain?

LEA-doctor: Simply that it feels weightless, somehow.

LEA: me – You're right! It is light. Like a white balloon. Like leaves on a bush. Like a plastic sachet. Did my mother give it to me? Or my father? Mother? Father? Father? Listen. Doesn't it also seem white to you, my name? Quite different from that black hole inside me?

LEA-doctor: It is white. Let's not talk now about a black hole. Instead try to recollect something from early in your life. Something nice. Try. See if it will come out.

Lea dances between the balloons then sits down between them.

LEA-child: Someone is holding me in his arms. Now he is carefully letting go, sitting me down in the meadow. The plants are high. I catch hold of their stems. The flowers are fragrant on their stalks. Flies are buzzing. The wind must be blowing softly because the stems are bending... The grass is soft. My bottom is bare but nothing is prickling me. They must have taken off my nappy to give me a proper airing. Next to me is a long leg. A man's leg. My father's. That is the first thing I remember. And the last memory I have of my father. To remember my father's leg! How super! And – though it's just a blur - I can somehow see his hands and face when he put me down in the grass.

LEA-doctor: Would you like to go back there? To find that place again?

LEA: me- Yes. But I don't have a clue where it was. Why do I remember grass? And not a carpet, for instance. Or a pram. A rattle. A dummy. Some little object. Yes, I would go there even if it was a hundred kilometres away! I would walk or hitch-hike. Really! I would be happy to find that place. To sit on the grass again. To hold that stem. To breathe the sweet-smelling air. To listen to the bumble-bees, the flies and the wind...

LEA-doctor: Do you know what the first thing I can remember is? How I fell into some water and my father pulled me out.

LEA: me - Your father rescued you. Ours abandoned us. I don't know anything about him.

/Lea puts away the balloon she was speaking with./

LEA: Where is your white voice, doctor? Are you leaving me, too? You who rekindled my first nice memory away from the sea. Because I still remember that horrible birth. and Mummy's hesitation. What should she do with that thing that came out so disgustingly from her? She breastfed me but it made her cry. So she soon switched to dried milk. I grew and grew. Like a beanstalk. Sometimes I locked myself in Mummy's wardrobe. I could smell her dresses. They smelt of smoke and beer. Spilt wine and perfume. As well as something very intimate. Spicy or something. Later I got to know it. The musk of sex. One day I found a little white balloon in her wardrobe. I blew it up and stepped out of the wardrobe. Mummy snatched it from me and went crazy, yelled at her lover for throwing away condoms like confetti. But when he left us, Mummy dried up, let herself go, the strength seeped out of her.

/Lea again picks up the balloon with her mother's face on it/.

LEA-mother: Lea! Run to the shop! Quickly, before it closes! Get me two bottles of fruit wine!

LEA: me - But they won't sell me wine. I'm too small. Last time they refused me point-blank.

LEA-mother: Oh, you can think of something. You are good at school – quite clever. Say that your father has come home. That imbecile! Tell them we want to treat him.

LEA: I haven't told you that I go to school now, have I? I know how to write, read, recite poems. A – B – C – do-ray-me - would you like to come for tea?.... Mummy doesn't have a job and just hangs around the flat in her dressing-gown.

LEA-mother: Don't worry! They won't lock me up! I've got you, you see. They won't do me for sponging off the state. I'll take a cleaning job. I'll get the better of them!. The cops! The spies. The whole screwed up system. Every system is screwed up! Checking up on people...Giving them no freedom...Telling a woman what she can and can't do with her own body. But what are we supposed to live on? I'm not putting you in a home. You wouldn't want it either, would you darling? Sleeping in the same room as lots of other little girls. On some metal bunk-bed. Listening to orders. Being like a soldier, like in prison. No, me and you, we're free spirits. We must keep together. Do you understand?

LEA: I like Mummy's dressing-gown even though it is stained. It is blue, with silver stars. One day she drops her dressing-gown and stands there completely naked. She's going to have a bath and calls to me.

LEA-mother: Lea! Come and wash my back! Today I want to be spotless. Scrub me well!

LEA: Mummy is lying in the bath. She has big round breasts. And some hair beneath her belly. I have got nothing down there. I have never seen Mummy like that before. When she sits up, I scrub her back with the sponge. I know why Mummy wants to be so clean. It is because she stinks of cats. She collects them. She loves cats. Only cats. "Be as smooth as a cat!" she says to me. "Then I will love you". And Mummy's eyes go all feline. Narrow, lazy. Her eyelids droop when she is drunk on fruit wine. When she has no money, though, they are wide and wild. Then she must wash and go out. For the whole night - just like cats do. They

all slum it in Mummy's bed. Purring and sleeping for hours on end. Sometimes, when Mummy is out all night, all day and all the next night, I have to feed the cats. It's when they start baring their teeth – those sharp teeth like needles. I am afraid then that they'll start biting me.

LEA: /shouting at her mother's face – the balloon, which she is squeezing tightly in her hands/ me- I hate those carcasses! Throw them all out!

LEA- mother: You don't like anybody or anything, do you?. You're like a stone. But if you could only learn to love cats, you would be like one of them. Yielding and soft. So wonderfully indifferent! Unpredictable. Mysterious. Indestructible. You would have seven lives.

LEA-child: Today she brought home yet another cat. She came home via the backstreets, the night-time places smelling of drains, tripe soup and urine. Mud on the pavements.

Everywhere this feeling of unease. Mummy drunk and carrying her shoes in her hands. Her stockings laddered. She is laughing even though she is all alone - except for the rats and cats walking behind her. She is one of them. She comes down the crumbling concrete stairs, clutching the crooked metal banister rail. And still falls into the gutter, flat on top of the poor pussycat, she says. "I have saved another soul," she tells me and collapses onto the bed fully-dressed. I put her sodden shoes away. Her feet are terribly cold and wet. Death is coming off them. I leave her in her clothes - just throw a blanket over her. The cats immediately cluster around her and start purring so that she can sleep the sleep of total oblivion.

LEA: Pst! Can you hear? Can you hear how the wind blows? How it moans through the glass and plays on the bars. Like an organ. If they opened the windows, perhaps it would blow into my mouth some fine sand from the bottom of the sea. From another world where it is always midnight. Where until midnight you can come and go as you please. If no-one detains you.

Oh doctor, with the white voice, where are you now? You are the only one to tell me you believe everything I say. You who rekindled my first happy memory. You're the only one I told about how I can dance like fish and walruses and penguins... That I just sprawl on the ground, feeling its weight, succumbing to it. I don't want to conquer the world like those ballerinas in their pointe shoes. In gilded theatres.

LEA-child: It is snowing and I'm walking to the cinema with Mummy. She is holding my hand in its woolly glove with holes in the fingers. The cinema smells of dust and the polish they use for wiping the seats. On the screen I can see a little girl. Perhaps she's got holes in her woolly gloves, too. She's walking on her own along the street. Suddenly she catches a glimpse of a dance hall. She can see walls made of mirrors and little girls wearing beautiful tutus and pointe shoes. They dance. Dance. Dance. In the street in the film, it's also snowing. It's early evening and the gas-lamps are being lit. Later the girl from the street starts to learn to dance. I still remember the woman-swan from that film. It's the very same little girl but now as a grown woman. She is dancing at dawn. By an enormous river. In an enormous city. A handsome man with a long white scarf is watching her. There is mist, fog everywhere...And then the pink sun starts to shine through the mist. It's beautiful. This dancing pair, so much in love! Like figures on a wedding cake.

LEA: One day a new man comes to see us. He looks like a half-baked loaf and his breath stinks. Mummy is lying in bed. She is drinking straight from a bottle. The man hands her another bottle and points at me. I always sleep on a couch alongside Mummy's bed. Now I am half-asleep and don't understand why this fatso is getting undressed and squeezing up alongside me. Why, when I am still alive, is she looking at me with those bulging lifeless eyes of hers? Why is rum dripping off her chin, onto her throat and vest, then onto the flyblown quilt? Why is this soft fatso, old as a turtle from the Galapagos Islands hissing in my ear: "Pyjamas are just a cover, you know. You don't need them. They are just the wrapping paper

– the present is inside.“? It is a warm night. I’m not wearing any pyjamas. Only an old t-shirt and knickers. He starts taking off my t-shirt. He touches my breasts and belly. He puts his hand between my legs. Again he hisses: “You want it, don’t you, you little tart. Oh yes, you do.“ His fat knee pushes between my legs. They are like sticks, like twigs, like matchsticks. Life is oozing out of me. Like from a piece of aspic jelly or a heap of fat. I scream and he slaps me across the face. He covers my mouth. Pulls my knickers down. I cry but he doesn’t care. With all my strength I head-butt him on the nose. I scratch and beat him. He grabs both my hands and stretches them above my head. He is crushing me. Squeezing the life out of me. I start to fly inside my own body like a balloon. I hide in my right thumb. He won’t catch me there. Under the man is only my shadow now. I thrust my thumb into my mouth and suck it furiously. I hide in my own mouth.

/Breathing wildly, struggling, Lea bursts the balloons. Then she calms down a little, occasionally talking with her thumb in her mouth/.

LEA: When it was all over, he scattered money everywhere. On my thighs. On Mummy’s mouth. She lay there like a corpse, gazing blankly into the darkness. And in the morning? Mummy went crazy: “How could you have let him? You tart! So young and you’re already giving it to old men! Have you got no shame?!“ Lea’s heart is pounding. Even more than... when ...that ... fatso...crushed... her. What is Mummy saying?! Why is she hitting Lea? Why... Mummy dances... on tables...in nightclubs. Then she brings.....some man home. Like that one....last night. Can’t she stop! Can’t she finish. Because Lea will never.....go out.....from the thumb....on her hand. She will keep... putting it in her mouth... sucking it... It’s a comfort to her.... Oh my doctor friend? Where is your white voice? How do you explain all of this? There are no explanations. They told me not to believe what I had seen with my own eyes.

That is what that last doctor, that conniver, said...., do you need a break from me? I have to stop! Stop! Or they will put me in a bed with a cage and won't let me paint!

/Lea is sitting. She is breathing hard but the struggle is over. More white balloons fall onto the stage. Lea paints a boy's face/.

LEA: Men weren't much interested in me. I didn't smell of sex to them. More of seaweed. In vain did I dance with them on terraces or in smoke-filled bars. "How old are you?" they would ask guardedly. "I don't want to get busted for cradle snatching." I was twelve. A year after the scene with the fatso. I put mascara on my eyelashes. Back-combed my hair. Applied cream to my face. Wore black eye-liner. I said I was a seamstress. And they really thought I was a little worker who would run through the rain to the factory. That I really did sew tutus for ballerinas. But rather than dancing, I preferred to walk down to the river. I would sit on the bank staring into the water. I liked the fact it was so lazy. Quiet. Even. Trees all around. No wind blowing. I loved such weather - the stillness of it. I didn't think of the past. My mind was empty. I could get better. Perhaps. And that's where he found me. My boy. My boy with the blond hair. My glider pilot. Sometimes I would dance for him. And he liked me.

LEA-as a glider pilot: I will take you up in the glider if you want.

LEA: Really?

LEA- as a glider pilot: Of course! It is fantastic up there. We'll be the most beautiful birds in the sky.

LEA: Away from everything. Like in the sea.

LEA-as a glider pilot: Pure adrenalin! There's nothing quite like it!

LEA: It was a calm night. Placid, like me. The boy didn't mind that I lacked the musk of sex. That I was afraid of such love. That I was of no use. Beautiful for nothing. He could rescue me. That boy from the glider.

LEA-as a glider pilot: We'll meet in town tomorrow, ok?

LEA: Ok.

LEA-as a glider pilot: Do you want some roasted chestnuts?

LEA: Roasted chestnuts warmed up your fingers. The wind was blowing. Fat women sold them in kiosks in the street.

LEA-as a glider pilot: We'll run away in spring. Get away from this country. We'll fly away in a super light aircraft. Over the border. Their bullets will never reach us.

LEA: What will we do there?

LEA-pilot: Travel from one town to another.

LEA: And do what in those towns?

LEA-glider pilot: Dance. Sit in cinemas. Whatever you feel like. Life will treat us better there.

LEA: What about money?

LEA-glider pilot: That's no problem! I'll be a flying instructor to some fat cat. Someone with his own plane.

LEA: Are there such people? I haven't even got a bicycle. /giggling/

LEA-glider pilot: Neither have I. And I'm fed up with it. I'll buy you a new dress. All bright and glittery. Because you're like something from the night sky.

LEA: I'm from the sea.

LEA-glider pilot: From nowhere at all.

LEA: Just from the sea.

LEA-glider pilot: You're a bit peculiar, do you know that? Kind of mysterious. I can just see you drinking coffee in a coffee-house. Or dancing out in the street. In Paris, for instance.

LEA: Can you do that there?

LEA-glider pilot: You can do whatever you want.

LEA: Or in Venice?

LEA-glider pilot: Or in London!

LEA: Or in Stockholm? It's by the sea.

LEA-glider pilot: But it's cold there. Better to go to Casablanca.

LEA: Like in the film..

LEA-glider pilot: Even better than in the film.

LEA: We kissed and caressed each other. I danced for him on the bank of the river. He said I'd be able to study dancing over there. I'd told him I was learning to be a ballet dancer. But then, fool, stupid fool that I am, I told him I often played truant. And asked when we would be leaving because they might be sending me to a reformatory. I told him about my mother. That's probably why he didn't come. The sun cooled. My heart weakened and my boy didn't come. Nor on the second day. Nor on the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, or the seventh.... He must have flown off on his own. In his glider. High above the wire fences. For me it was too high. But not for my pilot. I kept running back to the river. But for nothing. Had I already gone mad? Sometimes I forced myself to go out with Mummy. We'd be laughing, walking arm-in-arm. Mummy kept saying we must look just like sisters. I started to drink a bit myself. It's true. It... is... true! But never as much as she did. When I had to drag her home, we were no longer arm-in-arm. I carried her. She wasn't heavy, just skin and bone. I mean she hardly ate anything. She bought sandwiches in the station snack-bar or bowls of bean soup but she always poured some out for the station cat. That cat was also drunk. Drunk from the puddles of beer and wine on the platform. How she would stagger along, that old alcoholic cat that belonged to nobody. Sometimes Mummy beat me on the back, said how I didn't cook. Didn't do anything. Didn't even go to school. She had to lie to my class-teacher and say how I was often ill. That I had been vomitting again. And yet I had a good brain. Started school with top grades in every subject. "Your little girl is so clever! She has got such imagination! So unusual! So different from the others!" To think my first teacher said all that to her! And at

the time she was so proud she could hardly breathe, so happy was she that she had such a daughter. As a reward she bought me jars of stewed fruit, the ones with mixed fruit because I liked those best. And she expected me to rescue her. Because she had given me what she could and didn't want me to mess up my life like she had hers. Told me I had to try. ...And why was her life such a cock-up! When I told her I was sure I was pregnant, she went mad. She said she would kick me in the belly. And then I had to go with her to the park and find a tree with red berries. She said the infusion would expel the foetus from my body. In the evening I started throwing up. I got the shakes and terrible cramps. Then I passed out.... When I came round, Mummy was kneeling next to me, crying, begging me to forgive her. She kissed my face, said that men were pigs and that together we would cope because women were strong, just like trees. Just don't let me die! "Don't die! Don't die! Don't die!" she kept saying. But I was being pulled in another direction. Into some kind of immense sleep or unending silence. Into a great vacuum. I don't even know how long it all went on for.

Afterwards she hid me at Grandma's. *She* took care of me. Cooked me light meals and coddled me like when I was just a baby. She would kiss me on the forehead and rub my feet with her hands. Then she'd sing a song she had taught me long before. /singing/ "Old maids, what are you doing? Why don't you tie the knot? Buy some oil and grease your knees. You'll marry in a shot. And if it's not your will to, then have your portrait done. On white paper, on a tin plate, we'll watch you for the fun." Grandma had a face like a warm round cake. Like the cake she baked for Easter. I was safe again. But in me the baby of my glider pilot was still growing! My belly was getting bigger. /Lea puts a balloon under her shirt/. And nobody could see it. When, after a long break, I had to go back to school, nobody noticed anything. Not even Mummy or Grandma. I would stroke my belly. My tiny little glider pilot. I would coddle and stroke him and tell him funny stories. And then we would see. Then we would see! Then we would see!!! But what would we see?!!! What I saw was exactly what my mother had

once seen. I was alone in my room. Grandma had gone out. Suddenly a strange fear came over me. A fear so big, I was lost in it. After many years, I again took cover from it by going into my right thumb. Now I can't say if there really was a baby at the end of that cord or not. If I wasn't being too harsh on myself and it wasn't just a vision. If I myself wasn't the fish at the bottom of the sea. Or a pearl-oyster. Perhaps I had a pearl inside me. One too precious for anyone else to have, to take from me with their dirty fingers. Then everything seemed to blur in my head. Something switched off inside me which I can't explain. I have never been able to explain it. My brain was like porridge. Then they took me away. To a room with bars on the window. They kicked me. In the belly. Mostly in the belly. They said a woman who throws a new-born from the window needs to be kicked in the belly. 'A woman' they said, though I was still just a child! "Let her womb drop out of her. Never ever should she bring another child into the world. Not even if she was to change from a whore into a saint." I spat blood and saliva and mucus.. They stopped for a moment. Surely they couldn't kill me... these people who were supposed to be investigating the event. They wanted to understand something but what do *they* know. That I didn't kill the child. That I just did what I had to and threw a white pearl into the deep, silent water. Into the safety of the sea. Away from its bad mother, its mother with the black hole in her head. A white baby should be wrapped up in white emptiness, should be a pearl in the belly of the pearl-oyster. Then I came round in hospital. And slept. And slept. Always slept. Slept for all eternity..

I'm best off here. The walls are white. White doctors and nurses move between them...

They have to find out how it all was. But how what was? I remember only as far as my blond-haired boy. My glider pilot. And then Grandma with her face like a cake. Cut! The end! Then just the black hole. There are no explanations. They tell me I shouldn't believe what I saw with my own eyes. I like dark glasses. The sun makes my eyes sting. They tell me they were hallucinations, figments of my imagination... That I never gave birth to a child. That no-one

punished me or kicked me in the belly. No villain. No victim.. Perhaps I'm still deep in sleep. Perhaps I'm a plant and some child with a bare bottom is holding my stalk in its little fingers. Or perhaps you are in some magical sleep and I am jumping into your heads like a nasty dream... If I haven't killed anyone, then why is my brain so addled? Why am I on my knees? Am I waiting for my pilot to find me? Wearing a white shirt. Like an innocent. Like a new-born. But will he recognise me with my hair cropped and no lipstick on? One day they say I will go from this place. But where to? Grandma died in her sleep. And Mummy's heart gave way. When all this happened, she stopped eating. She stopped going out, both during the day and at night. It was at night when she died. They told me about it here. "Another misfortune has knocked on the door." - I am told that was the sentence I uttered on first hearing about it. Well, at least they let me paint here. And play ping-pong, if that boy who sometimes wants to run away calls me. He hangs on the gate and starts shouting. So they bring him back and give him injections. Then they leave him to sleep in silence, for hours and hours, in a locked room with bars on the window. Sometimes a new doctor comes. Another new doctor, standing here like still white water.

Lea puts the painted balloons in the space between the knives on the board. Then she starts painting on the white wrapping-paper, unfolded and standing upright in space on the floor.. She paints using the palms of her hands, which she dips into the blue paint. At first she paints standing up. She stretches out her arms as far as she can. She stands on the tips of her toes. It is as if she wanted to break out of her body. With the paint, her hands create some kind of figure on the white paper.

/she sings falteringly/

LEA: "Old maids, what are you doing? Why don't you tie the knot? Buy some oil and grease your knees. You'll marry in a shot. And if it's not your will to, then have your portrait done. On white paper, on a tin plate, we'll watch you for the fun."

/she is completely out of breath/

LEA: This is for me. And for you, too, if you want it. That empty, safe place. Here you can do anything. Munch chocolate. Stroke yourself. Sit. Stand. Be a plant. A sea creature. Just please yourself. Laugh like a lunatic. Dance. No-one will find you here. No long arm reach out for you. Here you are alone with yourself. With pure joy. No noise or junk here.

/Then she kneels, rests her forehead on the ground and pulls her arms over the paper which is unfolded on the ground. She pulls her arms backwards and brings them in to her body as much as possible. It is strenuous; we can hear how heavily she is breathing. A strange, tremulous, unsettled circle appears, rather like the shadow of a figure, on the wall and on the floor. Lea stands happily, at ease, in the centre, in an empty white space around her a dark blue painted outline of her body/.

LEA: Come to me! Come on... ! Come to me! Come...I so want you to. That empty place is for you, too...I am sending you kisses. I have learnt how to greet people. You haven't forgotten, have you? So come on...(she beckons the audience to come to her until at least one person volunteers. Lea then embraces him/her).

THE END

