

The Waste Land - choreographic script by Anni Kaila

*At the beginning the child was sent out to the country to see what
would become of it.*

*It returned as a creature they had no use for,
holes and hair in strange places and a particularly nasty habit
of pacing the hallways at night
like a restless dog keeping guard.*

I

She walks the tight-rope
with her hair down, so
the circus gathered at her feet
to watch her fall through the net
neatly down to the street.

Her face still hidden under all the people
she has yet to become,

she is everyone.

*Skip, skip, skip the rope
gently down the stream
merrily merrily merrily
life is like a dream
life is like a dream
life is like a dream*

(Plans for the playhouse were made that summer,
you stood by as the adults drew the lines in the grass.)

At the abandoned ribbon of a gymnast
she squats to surrender,

peering at their pointy guns-

Everyone laughs. Little pearls of spit
escape from their open mouths as she stumbles,
turns and reaches for their unhinged jaws

and pulls her teeth out in one exhilarating motion

You pull your teeth out in one exhilarating motion

to get the beauty of it hot:

II

Swan,

the burning lake beneath its feet

tumbling

through

a neatly arranged archive of shapes

It mourns the form of its wing.

(They brought it out from under the scattered shadow.

It had been badly cut,

a whole stream had slid out from its side.

From under the scattered shadow, someone shouted a faint echo.

The waste basket was brought out

and emptied in.)

The gentle outline of an old hag
selling cider at the street market
collapses into a shake

*Rebel girl, rebel girl you are the queen of
you are the queen*

a phoenix rises from nothing
and burns its wings on the stove

reduced to stumps
they commence their infernal domestic ritual
of stirring
shaking
choking
and breaking

a string of small pearl-shaped bones scatters
across the blackened lake

ear to the sea shell, how the ocean sings

III

The child is worried.

It hides its head in the night
and the feet, forgotten, look for a shape to hold on to.

Underneath it all there is just a shivering girl in a night gown
selling maybe matches and a side of leg
with goosebumps and baby hair

the outline of small sweaty breasts
clinging to the see-through shirt
as she jerks from phase to phase

burning through role after role like a chain smoker going through
packs of cigarettes

already longing for the next when only half-way through the
previous

a pocket watch set with a fat hard hand

it goes like time is running after it

At the still point of the turning world.

Neither flesh nor fleshless

you turn, your palms facing up

and it catches you.

A glass ornament is shattered in slow motion:

snap

the neck brakes

the dull teeth of the show dog

cut through the nightingale.

(The immigration centre is packed to the ceiling-

the nymphs are duly deported.)

IV

Drowning is the immaculate conception

You emerge from the water

your eyes thrown back

your feet panting

You glue your lung to the landscape

it expands through the waste,

breathing the air into being

v

Something heavy drops into your hand -
your daughter's green eye ball, a container of clear liquid.

You open at the thought of it,
and become the thing that goes inside you.

The knees do not reveal

what the thighs have not told them

each with its bruises

each with its gaping wound

protects the other.

The gas passes through you like being thrown off a high building

first the air hurts, then the landing-

the side of the thigh receives a high-pitched slap
as it encounters the floor.

This happens repeatedly, around a hundred times.

And then another hundred times more.

Is this why you chose to exist?

But I never did, you told me to, you said-

Is this what you expected it would be like?

No never, this was never my intention-

And now that you're here, how does it feel?

This happens repeatedly, around a hundred times.

And then another hundred times more.

An uncle had designed the house to keep its shape even in a storm

but no one had checked the plans for the playhouse

and when the rain came

the child was in there, playing alone, like always

with the tea set, gnawing at the cups

and after the sky had been washed clear

they remembered

but nobody went to look.

QUOTES/ Inspiration for lines

*...with her hair down, so - T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land: '...I shall
rush out as I am, and walk the street/ with my hair down, so.'*

to get the beauty of it hot - T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land

...gently down the stream... - English nursery rhyme, modified

Rebel girl, rebel girl... - punk song Rebel Girl by Bikini Kill

At the still point... - T.S. Eliot, Burn Norton (The Four Quartets)

*the nymphs are duly deported - T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land: 'The
nymphs are departed.'*