

drowning in euphoria
a full-length play
by Liza Lentini

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CHARACTERS

- LIA A youthful and enchanting woman who, in her own way, narrates our story.
- CAROLINE Early-mid twenties. She is the daughter of MARIE.
- MARIE In her mid-late forties, daughter of LUCKY, mother of CAROLINE.
- SIMON In his late fifties, he has a deteriorating condition which affects his ability to walk. Brother of MARIE, son of LUCKY.
- KEITH Around thirty; JAMIE's older brother, son of LIA.
- JAMIE Good-hearted, mid-late twenties. Brother of KEITH, son of LIA.

SETTING

A beach house. The set should be reminiscent of a dream, minimal furniture and low, colorful lighting. The house itself has a couch, chair and coffee table. Far down right, there is another chair, reminiscent of a throne, for SIMON. The set should appear as though it is the beach, even though it is actually the inside of a house. There may be sand on the floor, and the house should be surrounded by large boulders, the kind used to protect houses from precocious waves. It's worth mentioning that lighting plays an important part in this play.

TIME

The present and the past.

AT RISE:

Darkness. CAROLINE sings melodically. It's a seductive siren's call, and only lasts for a brief, lingering moment before LIA speaks.

(Lights up. Standing before us is LIA, youthful and beautiful, probably in her late twenties-early thirties. Her demeanor is calm, perhaps a bit coy. She speaks to the audience with Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "The Mermaid".)

LIA

Who would be a mermaid fair,
Singing alone, combing her hair,
Under the sea, in a golden curl,
With a comb of pearl,
On a throne?

I would be a mermaid fair.
I would sing to myself the whole of the day;
With a comb of pearl I would comb my hair;
And still as I comb'd I would sing and say,
"Who is it loves me? Who loves not me?"
I would comb my hair till my ringlets would fall
Low adown, low adown,
From under my starry sea-bud crown
Low adown and around;
And I should look like a fountain of gold
Springing alone
With a shrill inner sound,
Over the throne
In the midst of the hall;
Till that great sea-snake under the sea
From his coiled sleeps in the central deeps
Would slowly trail himself sevenfold
Round the hall where I sate, and look in at the gate
With his large eyes for the love of me.
And all the mermen under the sea
Would feel their immortality
Die in their hearts for the love of me.

(In the following segment, actors should feel free to overlap with one another. There is a definite rhythm that needs to be achieved.)

SIMON

(Holds up a small key.)
It's all about the key.

MARIE

(Wanting it.)
The key . . .

SIMON

It has to be given to you. Like it was to me.

MARIE

Muma gave that key to me.

SIMON

Daddy left this key to me--

MARIE

No!

SIMON

Yes.

KEITH

Anything you need, just ask.

SIMON

Someone get Caroline.

CAROLINE

Dear Mummy,
Paris.
Spring.
Flowers.
Perfect.

JAMIE

Caroline--

CAROLINE

Dear Jamie,
Sicily.
Summer.
So . . .
Sentimental.

SIMON

What on earth has happened to Caroline?

KEITH

She's gone for good.

JAMIE

Where are you, Caroline?

CAROLINE

Dear Lucky--

SIMON

Come over here and give your uncle a kiss!

MARIE

(Sternly.)
Lucky.

CAROLINE

Lucky?

JAMIE

Lucky.

SIMON

I have the key.

MARIE

Lucky . . . The house.

CAROLINE

Lucky?

MARIE

Come home.

CAROLINE

Lucky? Answer me.

Dear, God . . . JAMIE

Caroline! Come sit by me, Caroline! SIMON

It's been a year . . . JAMIE

Has it been a year . . . KEITH

Lia . . . MARIE

Drowned . . . JAMIE

Drowning. (With great concern.) CAROLINE

Caroline . . . MARIE

(CAROLINE is distracted.)

How could she have drowned . . . KEITH

Keith, I have something to tell you . . . Your mother has drowned. SIMON

Jamie, I have something to tell you . . . Your mother has drowned. MARIE

Drowned? JAMIE

Drowned? KEITH

Drowning . . . (Wistfully.) CAROLINE

(LIA laughs lightly.)

Lia has drowned.	MARIE
How is Lucky?	CAROLINE
It's been a year . . .	JAMIE
Tell me what happened, Caroline.	KEITH
Come sit by me, Caroline!	SIMON
It's time to come home, Caroline.	MARIE
Mummy . . .	CAROLINE
We're closing in on October.	MARIE
Come home.	JAMIE
Caroline's coming home?	KEITH
Caroline's coming home!	SIMON
Caroline!	EVERYBODY
I'm coming.	CAROLINE

(Immediately we break to the living room of the beach house. There is a comfortable, ornate, velvet couch which sits center. The floor itself is a beach, covered in sand. SIMON, a man of around sixty years, sits with a cane propped in his hand. He is of

money and it shows in his actions. He wears an expensive sweater and pants, good shoes. MARIE sits next to him, with distance. An attractive woman in her late forties, she is more comfortably dressed but with the same air of expense.)

LIA

"Might you know the way back home," asked the mermaid of the sea gull, for she had been in girl-form for so long that she'd quite forgotten that she belonged in the sea. "I've been away for such a great while and I'm desperate to return. Might you know the way?" "Of course I know the way," was the bird's retort, "you are a mermaid. And you belong to the water."

SIMON

Is Caroline coming?

MARIE

She'll be here as soon as she can.

SIMON

What time is it now?

MARIE

5:00.

LIA

"Oh, you must be mistaken," remarked the girl, who was quite a woman now. "I am not a mermaid. For mermaids are nothing but fish. And as you can plainly see, I am not a fish at all."

SIMON

One whole year without Caroline. Never thought I'd make it.

LIA

"Please spare me and show me the way back home."

MARIE

Keith's been in there an awfully long time.

(Pause.)

He must have a lot to say.

SIMON

This must be hard on him, poor kid. Bad enough he lost his mother last year . . . and now his grandmother . . . God. What that boy must be going through.

LIA

"I am only trying to spare you," said the bird.

MARIE

Muma's not dead yet, Simon.

LIA

"I'd spare you if I could."

SIMON

I know, Marie. But . . . you have to face facts.

MARIE

I am.

SIMON

I don't know why she's not in a hospital. She should be in a hospital where she can receive proper care.

MARIE

She told us a long time ago that if anything like this were to happen, she wanted to stay in the house. She has a right to that.

SIMON

She wouldn't know the difference, she's in a coma.

MARIE

Simon, please.

SIMON

She's sure to die if she's not in a hospital. And won't you feel bad--

MARIE

Well, she's not dead yet. Just sign the papers before Keith comes out--.

SIMON

What that kid must be going through . . . You know, people are always talking about what an angel Jamie is, but I think it's pretty clear which brother pulled through for his grandmother in the end.

MARIE

What are you talking about?

SIMON

I mean, all Keith's life he's been living in the shadow of his little brother and now it's up to Keith to hold the vigil for the two of them.

MARIE

It is because of Jamie that Muma was able to be here in the first place--

SIMON

That's not the point, Marie. Anybody could have set Muma up in a room with an IV. It's the person who's willing to stick around . . . that's Keith. Keith didn't just run off to work—

MARIE

I really can't talk about this right now. Just sign the papers. I don't want Keith to see.

SIMON

It can't be good for so many people to die in one place--

MARIE

Stop it.

SIMON

Think of what that must do to this house.

MARIE

You're never even here. There's no reason that should bother you.

SIMON

That boy was crushed.

MARIE

Who?

SIMON

Keith. To lose his mother like that.

MARIE

He hadn't seen her in years.

SIMON

But he was in pain, Marie. You have to understand--

MARIE

(Interrupting.)

I love Keith, you know I do. But there is a good reason Lia called him her prodigal son.

SIMON

That's exactly what I'm talking about! So he got into a little trouble as a kid. That's no reason to single him out as the bad son and Jamie as the good son. This isn't Cain and Abel we're talking about--

MARIE

I know who we're talking about.

SIMON

He's a troubled boy. We need to look after him.

MARIE

So he should be privileged because he's troubled, is that what you're saying.

SIMON

Jamie always had it easy. He got good grades, he was well liked--

MARIE

I love Keith. Just as much as Jamie. But they are very different boys. That is a fact.

SIMON

That's exactly what I'm trying to tell you.

MARIE

Just sign the papers, Simon.

SIMON

We need to take care of Keith more.

MARIE

Keith is already taken care of. His father left everything to him when he died, the entire estate--

SIMON

He works hard on that house--

MARIE

And Lia and Jamie got nothing--

SIMON

How did Lia really die?

MARIE

You know how Lia died.

SIMON

I mean really.

LIA

"Go to that water over there and look," said the seagull.

MARIE

She drowned. Really.

LIA

"Tell me what you see."

SIMON

Was it really an accident?

MARIE

I wasn't there--

SIMON

I bet Caroline knows. She was with her, right? She was the one who dragged her body out of the ocean.

(He's finally found a way to upset her.)

MARIE

Don't you dare ask her about that. Don't you dare.

SIMON

Why not? She shouldn't have anything to hide.

LIA

When she looked at her own reflection, it was unrecognizable. Her eyes had grown quite small, and she'd never seen her neck so short. Her hair was straight and flat, not at all what she'd remembered. But something more was missing, something bigger still. Suddenly, as she peered deeper into the calm, shallow water she saw all her lives pass by right in front of her. What was to be, and what could have been.

(KEITH emerged from LUCKY's room. He wipes his eyes as though he's been crying and goes to MARIE and gives her a kiss on the cheek.)

LIA

Her eyes welled up with tears and her hands were beginning to tremble. A powerful force was pulling her into the ocean.

SIMON
How are you, boy?

KEITH
I can't believe it . . . I just can't believe it . . .

SIMON
Your brother'll be here soon.

KEITH
When's he coming?

SIMON
Soon. I guess he had to finish up something at work.

KEITH
Work? His grandmother's on her deathbed and he's worried about his job!

SIMON
I know, I know . . .

MARIE
Who are you talking about?

SIMON
Jamie.

MARIE
What about him?

KEITH
I was just saying that I wish he was here . . . I wish the whole family were here. That's the way it should be. The way Lucky'd want it to be.

MARIE
Lucky wouldn't have wanted Jamie to leave the emergency room. She told him that a long time ago.

KEITH
I just wish he was here.

SIMON
We all do.

MARIE
You know what city hospitals are like.

KEITH

Why didn't he just leave his job. This is, after all, his grandmother. I'd hate to think that he didn't care enough to come for her.

MARIE

You've never had a job where people put their life in your hands, have you?

SIMON

Not exactly. But that doesn't mean that your jobs weren't important, Keith.

(KEITH smiles at his uncle. There's a long, awkward pause, perhaps twenty or thirty seconds.)

LIA

"Please spare me and show me the way back home."

SIMON

It's a sad day.

KEITH

Certainly is.

SIMON

When did you say Caroline was coming, Marie.

KEITH

(Suddenly very anxious.)

Caroline?

MARIE

Any minute.

KEITH

Caroline? Here?

(Perhaps LIA sees that KEITH is nervous and laughs a little at him.)

MARIE

Of course.

KEITH

Oh.

MARIE

You said you wanted the whole family . . . looks like you'll get your wish.

KEITH

Well, I don't see how she can show her face. If she hadn't left in the first place Lucky never would've--

SIMON

Caroline had nothing to do with it. She wasn't even here.

KEITH

I know, that's exactly what--

SIMON

Watch what you say about Caroline. I mean it.

(Pause.)

KEITH

Sorry.

SIMON

Me too. I'm sorry, Keith. I'm just a little upset--

KEITH

I know, I know . . . it's got us all. Well . . .

(He moves to hug SIMON, or shake his hand.)

Good to see you, as always.

SIMON

Why don't we go out for a beer sometime next week. Just you and me. Seems like I never see you!

KEITH

You know me, always keeping busy.

MARIE

Doing what?

KEITH

Well . . . I've been doing some work on the house . . .

MARIE

What kind of work?

KEITH

This and that . . . You probably wouldn't understand.

MARIE

Someday you'll have to explain it to me.

(JAMIE enters.)

LIA

"I must warn you," said the gull, "home does not exist ever since you left. But I suppose being part human, you are allowed to make mistakes."

KEITH

Jamie! Finally . . .

JAMIE

(Distracted, concerned.)

How is she?

LIA

Home . . ." he stretched out his long white wing and pointed towards the horizon, "is that way."

(SIMON motions to LUCKY. JAMIE runs to her.)

KEITH

He's obviously disturbed by this. Poor guy.

MARIE

Aren't we all.

SIMON

Well, I know you gotta run, kid.

KEITH

Yeah. I really do. Take care everybody.

SIMON

Call me next week.

KEITH

If I don't see you sooner.

SIMON

Right.

(KEITH exits.)

MARIE

I hope Caroline gets here soon.

SIMON

Me too.

MARIE

Please sign the papers, Simon. While Jamie's in with Muma.

SIMON

Is Caroline still with her boyfriend? What's his name . . . Michael?

MARIE

I don't know. Sign the papers.

SIMON

(Pause.)

I think we need to talk about this.

MARIE

We already did. Sign them.

SIMON

I'm not so sure we talked as much as I wanted us to.

MARIE

We made an agreement. I put Muma's brownstone into a life estate for you, you sign this house over to me. Now, give me the key. That was the deal.

SIMON

I'm not so sure I remember that being the deal.

MARIE

Of course it was. I don't know what difference it makes to you. The brownstone's worth a lot more than the beach house.

SIMON

I know that.

MARIE

And you've never liked this place.

SIMON

But, it is still my house.

MARIE

Daddy willed it to you, but it was never your house.

SIMON

Daddy trusted this house to me.

MARIE

Daddy didn't want all of Muma's property left in her name, in case something should happen to her--

SIMON

Thanks to you, nothing's in her name now.

MARIE

And you agreed to sign the beach house over to me.

SIMON

No. No, I didn't.

MARIE

Of course you did.

SIMON

No. I said, I'd sell it to you.

MARIE

Sell it to me? How would I pay for it? My only asset was the brownstone, and I just signed that over to you!

SIMON

Which was your choice.

MARIE

We had a deal.

SIMON

My memory isn't so good.

MARIE

Don't do this, Simon.

SIMON

Honestly, I think it's you who's screwed things up . . . In your head.

MARIE

Muma is going to live. Do not do this to her!

SIMON

A guy could get a pretty penny for a house like this.

MARIE

She'd rather be dead than live without this house.

SIMON

I always think that it's a shame when people allow material possessions to control their lives. Don't you?

MARIE

Don't do it.

SIMON

I often pity those people. I really, really do.

LIA

"I am not a fish. I am a woman."

MARIE

If you hate me, fine. But don't torture Muma this way.

SIMON

Muma is dead.

MARIE

She is not dead!

SIMON

Yes. She is.

MARIE

No!

SIMON

It's time for her to die, Marie. Face it.

(SIMON quickly addresses JAMIE as though the conversation with MARIE did not happen.)

LIA

"Please just spare me--"

SIMON
How is she?

JAMIE
She looks like she's sleeping.

SIMON
Peacefully I hope.

(MARIE throws SIMON a look.)

JAMIE
Yes.

SIMON
Must be hard on you, Jamie. With your mother passing just a year ago.

JAMIE
(Awkwardly.)
Yeah.

SIMON
Have you been getting along all right?

JAMIE
Until now.

SIMON
Good.

JAMIE
Are you okay, Auntie?

LIA
She saw all her lives pass by right in front of her.

SIMON
Jamie, Auntie Marie and I are very tired. Would you mind waiting with Lucky, just in case something happens?

JAMIE
Sure.

LIA

What was to be, and what could have been.

(JAMIE disappears again.)

MARIE

Sign the papers.

SIMON

Are you still on that?

MARIE

We had a deal.

SIMON

Our mother is dying and all you can think about is the house! I think you need to readjust your priorities, Marie.

MARIE

Muma is living. What will kill her is the thought that she no longer has a home. And I know you, Simon. You'll do anything to get rid of her.

SIMON

That's disgusting!

MARIE

If you sign the papers, you never have to see me or Muma for the rest of your life.

SIMON

Muma is dead, Marie.

MARIE

No, she's not!

SIMON

And I'm not signing anything over to you.

(Beat.)

MARIE

We had an agreement.

SIMON

You keep telling me we made an agreement, but I don't remember any such thing. Do you have any proof?

MARIE

Proof? We agreed together! You were here! Why would I deliberately leave me and Muma without a dime! It makes no sense!

SIMON

It makes the same amount of sense as Daddy leaving this house to me. He trusted me the most.

MARIE

I'll kill you before I watch you kill our mother.

SIMON

Some people just live too long, Marie.

(As MARIE hurriedly exits.)

LIA

A strong wave had thrown the water nymph mid-day onto shore. Her whole life she'd been cared for by the other ocean maidens, and never longed to discover the world known as the land. Suddenly she began to feel grief and loss through her transformation; her scales dissolved into flesh and legs appeared, then finally feet. And now that she was out in the open air, she found that she couldn't breathe. She could not have been on land for more than a moment and the water now seemed so very far away.

(By the end of LIA's story, CAROLINE has entered. She has obviously seen a lot in her life, but has managed to retain some of her childlike innocence. CAROLINE's eyes lock with SIMON's. They stay that way for a while.)

CAROLINE

(Stoic, very serious.)

How is she?

SIMON

(Slightly defeated.)

It's not good, honey.

CAROLINE

Has she spoken? Asked for anyone?

SIMON

Not a word.

CAROLINE

Where's my mother?

SIMON

Why don't we go down the beach, Caroline. Just you and me.

(JAMIE enters. He and CAROLINE lock eyes.)

LIA

But just then a young mariner appeared. In selfish delight she resigned to remain on land just a bit longer.

CAROLINE

(Still distracted by JAMIE.)

You don't have to stay, Uncle Simon. We'll look after Lucky.

SIMON

Well . . . If you really think I should go--

CAROLINE

Yes. Go.

SIMON

I don't know if I feel right about it--

CAROLINE

Go. I'll let you know if anything changes.

JAMIE

Can I help--

SIMON

No. I'm fine.

(He stands and looks endearingly to CAROLINE.)

I've really missed you, Caroline. I bet you're not too big to sit on my lap.

CAROLINE

(Lightheartedly.)

I'm all grown up now.

SIMON

You used to sit on my lap all the time.

CAROLINE

That was a long time ago.

(SIMON approaches her and gets very close to her face.)

SIMON

What's this . . .

(SIMON very slowly draws a coin out of CAROLINE's ear.
CAROLINE can't help but being delighted by this.)

SIMON

Bet you didn't know you had a quarter in your ear! Do you still like to go to the movies, Caroline?

CAROLINE

Sometimes.

SIMON

Are you still with, Michael?

(The tone changes.)

CAROLINE

No.

SIMON

Well, then, there's still a chance for me after all!

(CAROLINE smiles weakly.)

SIMON

Don't be down, Caroline. There's someone for everyone. Right Jamie?

JAMIE

So I've heard.

SIMON

Yeah. Me too.

JAMIE

No one's caught you yet, Uncle Simon.

SIMON

No. No, that's true. And there's something to be said for the single's life, I'll tell you.

(CAROLINE is obviously not listening, looking out at the water. JAMIE is watching her.)

SIMON

Well, I guess I'll go. Take care, honey.

(To JAMIE.)

Don't let her stay up all night.

JAMIE

(Helping SIMON to his feet.)

You think I can control her?

SIMON

You two were always so close. Must be nice to have somebody who understands you.

Look at that picture over there . . .

(JAMIE and CAROLINE turn to look at a photo of them
as children.)

SIMON

Both of you couldn't have been more than five years old, and your already kissing each other right on the mouth. You kids were so funny. Nobody told you that cousins didn't do that sort of thing.

(SIMON finds humor in this. JAMIE chuckles awkwardly.
CAROLINE is looking out at the water.)

SIMON

Well . . . Goodnight, kids.

JAMIE

Goodnight, Uncle Simon.

(SIMON is out of the scene. JAMIE turns his attention to
CAROLINE.)

JAMIE

Do you want to see her?

CAROLINE

She knows I'm here.

(Beat.)

JAMIE

How are you?

CAROLINE

(She nods her head assuredly.)

You?

JAMIE

Same.

(Beat.)

I just wish she'd wake up.

CAROLINE

She wishes you'd come by more. She's lonely.

(Slight pause.)

Did you go by your mom's grave today?

JAMIE

This morning.

CAROLINE

(Slight pause.)

Are you okay. With today . . . Being here . . .

JAMIE

Now that you're here.

CAROLINE

Where's my mother?

JAMIE

I guess she went down the beach.

CAROLINE

(Quietly.)

Something's wrong.

JAMIE

Maybe she just went for a walk.

CAROLINE

(Knowingly.)

No.

JAMIE

Where have you been, Caroline?

CAROLINE

All over.

JAMIE

Michael?

(Pause. She looks at JAMIE. Then, shakes her head "no".)

JAMIE

What happened?

CAROLINE

It's over.

JAMIE

Why?

CAROLINE

It's over.

JAMIE

I'm sorry.

CAROLINE

Are you?

JAMIE

Yeah. I am.

CAROLINE

Huh. Funny.

JAMIE

What?

CAROLINE

Me and you always meeting like this. It's funny.

JAMIE

Funny is not the word for it.

CAROLINE

I think it's funny that Uncle Simon brought up the picture. That's how I always remember us.

Yeah.
(Long pause.)
Do you want to talk about it?

Not really.

Okay.

Is there really anything to talk about?

I think there is.

Then let's talk.

I don't know what to say to you.

I can tell.

I don't know if this is the right time.

Or place.

(She moves toward him.)

Is Michael really gone?

Does it matter?

No.

Then why did you ask?

JAMIE

CAROLINE

JAMIE

CAROLINE

JAMIE

CAROLINE

JAMIE

CAROLINE

JAMIE

CAROLINE

JAMIE

CAROLINE

JAMIE

CAROLINE

JAMIE

I don't know.

CAROLINE

(Smiles.)

You're so nervous.

JAMIE

(He pushes her away, playfully.)

C'mon, Caroline.

CAROLINE

The summer wasn't the same without you--

JAMIE

We could go to a judge. We could go to a judge and ask him if he'd let us get married.

CAROLINE

Married?

(Beat.)

I thought we went through this--

JAMIE

It's time, Caroline.

CAROLINE

Tell me you understand, Jamie. We will never get married. Tell me you understand.

JAMIE

(Beat.)

Why?

CAROLINE

Lucky.

JAMIE

Right . . .

CAROLINE

And she isn't going to die.

JAMIE

No, she won't die.

CAROLINE

She won't die. And I won't leave her until she's well.

JAMIE

She'll be fine. I know it.

(Pause.)

What are your plans. Now that Michael's no longer a plan.

CAROLINE

I don't know.

(Pause.)

When Lucky gets better . . .

JAMIE

And she will.

CAROLINE

I'll see what she wants me to do. If she wants me to stay around, I will.

JAMIE

That sounds like a plan.

(Slight pause.)

What happened with Michael?

CAROLINE

Nothing. That's why we aren't together.

(They move to kiss. MARIE enters, which stops them
CAROLINE and her mother look to each other, but say nothing.
They have a long, silent moment before either speaks.)

MARIE

Jamie, why don't you take a walk down the beach.

JAMIE

I need to be here in case--

CAROLINE

Go ahead, Jamie.

(JAMIE exits. CAROLINE looks at MARIE for a moment,
silently asking the question, "What happened to Lucky?")

MARIE

I found her. She was laying by her bed.

Simon?
CAROLINE

Downstairs.
MARIE

He had no idea she was up there?
CAROLINE

Exactly.
MARIE

Good thing you came when you did.
CAROLINE

I was scared, Caroline.
MARIE

Lucky would tell us when it was time.
CAROLINE

Not if she couldn't see it coming.
MARIE

Meaning?
CAROLINE

You know what I mean.
MARIE

He wouldn't dare.
CAROLINE

Caroline . . .
MARIE

Tell me.
CAROLINE

SIMON
(From his chair, downstage.)
Caroline! Caroline! Come sit by me, honey.

MARIE
It's the worst you could possibly imagine. Worse than anything you've already seen.

SIMON

Caroline . . . Come here, sweetheart.

CAROLINE

Keith wasn't here, was he?

MARIE

He put on quite a show. You missed it.

CAROLINE

I know it well, believe me.

MARIE

Simon won't sign the house over to me.

CAROLINE

Offer him some money. He'll do anything for money.

SIMON

Sing me a song, Caroline. I know you like to sing.

MARIE

I offered him the brownstone.

CAROLINE

What did he say?

SIMON

So you get the beach house and I get the brownstone . . . seems like a fair deal to me.

MARIE

He took it.

CAROLINE

And?

SIMON

Remember that story I told you, about the fox and the grapes?

MARIE

He sucked me in.

CAROLINE

You trusted him?

SIMON

What did I tell you? Go on, honey. Tell me the story . . . like I told it to you . . .

MARIE

I had no choice. I was desperate.

CAROLINE

Mummy, no.

MARIE

You weren't here. And I was afraid we'd lose Lucky--

CAROLINE

I don't believe this.

MARIE

Simon's going to sell the house. I know it.

CAROLINE

That won't happen.

MARIE

We need to take care of it somehow.

SIMON

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there lived an old, grey fox--

(CAROLINE suddenly gets an idea.)

CAROLINE

I think it's time for things to be put right. Don't you?

(The two women look at each other for a moment, good
and hard.)

MARIE

You mean . . .

CAROLINE

All things return to their proper place.

(Beat.)

Will you help me?

LIA

Years before he had captured her by grasping her by the hair and pulling her to shore. Captivated by her beauty, he succeeded in marrying her and forcing her to bear his children. And though many years had past, and she faithfully remained on land, each day he would awake to the same fear that the night would seduce her and he would have lost her to the sea. And as even more years past, and she had done more time on shore, he began to finally realize that his lady from the sea was never really his to possess, and that mermaids are faithful to no one, except the mystery of the deep, blue ocean.

(A woman in the distance is laughing. There is the strong sound of wind surrounding the house as the lights dim. The wind continues through the pass of time. It is later that evening. We hear KEITH calling from off stage.)

KEITH

Uncle Simon? Are you there? It's Keith. I thought you might like some company.

(SIMON is trying to stand up and is struggling.)

KEITH

Let me help you, Uncle Simon.

(KEITH helps him back into his chair.)

SIMON

Thanks, Keith. You know I can't get around too well anymore . . . my legs are really bad.

KEITH

I know. I'm sorry. Isn't there anything you can take?

SIMON

(Shakes his head.)

It's killing me.

KEITH

Well, anything you need . . . You just ask.

SIMON

Thanks. It's good to see you. You know, Jamie used to come around a lot, but not now. Do you think it's the graveyard shift that does it to him, or . . .

KEITH

I really don't know. I mean, how much could he be working? I guess that probably came out pretty judgmental . . . I take it back. I'm sure Jamie's working really long hours--

SIMON

No. Say what you were going to say, Keith.

KEITH

I just don't get him. So maybe he's working a lot . . . Even so, he hasn't been around in a while. Has he?

SIMON

No. You're right. I don't remember the last time he was here.

KEITH

It was a while ago. I'm not trying to badmouth him or anything--

SIMON

No, no. It doesn't seem like that at all.

KEITH

All I'm saying is that he really needs to get his priorities straight. He's just been throwing himself into his job since our mother died.

SIMON

People react to death in strange ways. Look at your Aunt Marie. Now, I'm not one to badmouth my sister any more than you are to badmouth your brother--

KEITH

Oh, I know you wouldn't--

SIMON

But I don't know if she ever grieved for your mother. I'm not saying she didn't love her--

KEITH

Of course not.

SIMON

But I don't think she ever grieved.

KEITH

She and Lucky haven't left the beach house since.

SIMON

That's not grieving.

KEITH

No?

SIMON

I'm not quite sure what it is, but it's not grieving.

KEITH

You may be right.

SIMON

I am.

KEITH

Well . . . I hope I'm not keeping you from anything--

SIMON

Actually, I was just going over the deed to the beach house.

KEITH

Oh? Well, that's pretty private business. Do you want me to leave--

SIMON

No. No reason for you to leave.

LIA

"Where might I get a bite to eat,"
 Asked the shark of the shark.
 "I've been swimming in circles all day long,
 And it's getting close to dark."

"Don't worry," said the elder, smiling wide.
 "You're soon to enjoy your plate.
 Where you smell blood, you'll find your meal,
 And it'll be worth the wait."

"But I'm swimming in circles," exclaimed the youth,
 "With still no feed in view."
 "Ah, yes," said the elder opening his jaws,
 "That's because the meal is you!"

(Cross fade to CAROLINE, sitting alone. MARIE enters.)

MARIE

I'm gonna take a walk down the beach. I'd love it if you'd come.

CAROLINE

I . . . I don't know.

(MARIE angrily starts to exit.)

CAROLINE

Are you going alone?

MARIE

Yes. I am going alone. I do everything alone.

CAROLINE

No, you don't. You spend the day with Lucky--

MARIE

But I am always alone, Caroline. I'm still alone in this . . . this mess! I am alone when you leave again. You're like the god damned wind and if your grandmother could talk she'd tell you it's driving her crazy!

CAROLINE

Don't speak for her--

MARIE

Then I'll speak for me. What's happening here is just so typical of what has been happening my entire life!

CAROLINE

What are you talking about?

MARIE

Don't think that I don't see what's going on here! You just walked in after disappearing for an entire year, living as far away from all of us as possible, and you're going to be the heroine! I am the one who has taken care of Lucky her whole life and I'm not even recognized here!

CAROLINE

Mummy, no one is taking any of that away from you--

MARIE

Why are you the one that's asked for?

CAROLINE

Because I'm the one that goes away! I don't understand you. You wanted me to come--

MARIE

But you are going to leave. You are going to leave her and me miserable. And you will not be the one who has to deal with that. I will.

CAROLINE

Don't be afraid.

MARIE

Oh, you think you know everything.

CAROLINE

You've never been able to listen, Mummy. Not to me, not to Lucky and not to yourself. Start listening and maybe you won't feel so helpless all the time.

(Pause.)

MARIE

Why won't you go with me?

CAROLINE

I don't want to leave Lucky alone.

MARIE

But inevitably, you will.

(MARIE exits in haste.)

LIA

"It certainly would be much nicer if I had someone to play with," said the mermaid. The sun was just setting now, and she sadly watched as everything lost its luster right before her eyes.

(KEITH enters quietly, but is stopped by CAROLINE's glare.)

CAROLINE

(Fiercely.)

Get out.

KEITH

Hello, Caroline. Haven't seen you for a while.

CAROLINE

Get out of here.

KEITH

You used to like me. Remember how it was when you liked me?

CAROLINE

I have no use for you, Keith. Just crawl back into your hole and leave me and Lucky alone.

KEITH

I didn't come to see Lucky. I came to see you, Caroline.

VOICES

I came to see you, Caroline.

CAROLINE

Get out.

KEITH

What's wrong, Caroline?

VOICES

(In a whisper.)

What's wrong, Caroline?

KEITH

Don't be afraid.

VOICES

Don't be afraid.

KEITH

Don't be afraid.

VOICES

Trust me.

KEITH

It's just me. Keith.

VOICES

Don't you like that, Caroline?

KEITH

Sshhh . . .

CAROLINE

(Beginning to get upset.)

Oh . . . God . . .

KEITH

Lots of memories in this house, huh Caroline.

CAROLINE

Get out of here and never come back.

Or else . . . ?

KEITH

I'll kill you.

CAROLINE

(Mockingly.)
Do you want me dead, Caroline?

KEITH

CAROLINE
You know . . . Don't act like you don't know.

KEITH
We're family. We have to bond together in these hard times.

CAROLINE
It's a little late for bonding, don't you think?

KEITH
Never.

CAROLINE
I'll kill you if you ever come back here again. That's a promise.

KEITH
I'm scared.

CAROLINE
Get out.

KEITH
What did you do to my mother? They say she drowned, but Mother was an excellent swimmer--

CAROLINE
If you want to talk to the police, go right ahead. They already declared it an accident.

KEITH
I don't want to go to the police. I'm asking you.

CAROLINE
She got pulled under. That's all.

KEITH

My mother grew up in that water. It just seems strange that she could have drowned like that--

CAROLINE

I'd say her death was pretty appropriate.

KEITH

So your saying, it was her choice?

CAROLINE

I'm not saying anything. I wouldn't speak for her.

KEITH.

Tell me what happened, Caroline.

VOICES

Trust me.

CAROLINE

No.

KEITH

I know you think about it.

(LIA is laughing, but it is muffled.)

CAROLINE

There's nothing to tell.

VOICES

They can't hear you.

KEITH

Are you sure?

VOICES & CAROLINE

Yes.

KEITH

Well, if you change your mind, you let me know.

(He begins to exit.)

Now, why would you threaten to kill me, Caroline? That's not a very nice thing to do.

(KEITH exits. CAROLINE watches him go.)

LIA

Though the king had forewarned his crew against heeding the mermaid's call, one night he awoke from a deep sleep to the sound of a song so sweet it could not be ignored. "I am yours and you are mine, " and the dark winds carried it so swiftly that it warmed him like the sun. "I am yours and you are mine." And for a moment, as he stood perched on the edge of the deck, the ship rocking over the calm waves, he considered his life overboard.

SIMON

(From his seat.)

Children! Gather round me . . . you too, Jamie.

(Playfully.)

Now, we're all going to play a game. I want you all, one by one, to tell me all the ways that you love me!

LIA

"I am yours and you are mine."

SIMON

(From his chair.)

Caroline! Come sit by me, Caroline!

KEITH

Uncle Simon, you know how I feel about you, don't you?

SIMON

Tell me.

KEITH

There aren't words. I love you more than my eyesight, my world or my freedom. More than money, honor or life. You are like a father to me. Words are not able to express my love for you.

SIMON

Jamie? You are made from the same metal as your brother, after all.

JAMIE

Why do you ask me . . .

SIMON

It's a game! It's for fun!

JAMIE

Uncle Simon, you know I love you.

How much?
SIMON

Very much.
JAMIE

Tell me.
SIMON

JAMIE
I believe that love lies in the heart. It is perhaps the purest of all senses. It alone can drive a man, either to happiness, or to despair.

Caroline?
SIMON

How's Lucky?
JAMIE

Nothing's changed.
CAROLINE

Come sit by me, Caroline!
SIMON

CAROLINE
No. I don't want to play. Love has nothing to do with words.

But . . .
SIMON

(He holds up the key.)

CAROLINE
I don't care.

MARIE
Caroline!

CAROLINE
Forget it! Forget about the key! I don't care! You're going to die with that key, Uncle Simon. And I don't want to play with you.

LIA

"But don't you want to play?" She held her arms outstretched.
 "Oh, yes," he replied. Smiling, she pulled him under the waves. Down, down, down. In his foolish laughter, he'd not considered that possibility that he might never return. Down, down, down. "How do you like my game," she asked. But with all his high spirits, the man could no longer reply.

(MARIE is alone. CAROLINE enters carrying a live lobster.)

CAROLINE

(Holding the lobster.)

I brought dinner!

(Beat.)

Mummy? I brought lobsters.

(MARIE ignores her.)

CAROLINE

Have you been down the beach? We're going to have the biggest waves tonight! I bet the biggest we've ever seen.

LIA

Don't you want to play?

CAROLINE

And we've seen some big waves, haven't we?

LIA

Down, down, down . . .

(Beat. CAROLINE reflects on LIA. She notices MARIE and goes to her. MARIE has her back to CAROLINE and doesn't see that CAROLINE's holding the lobster very close.)

CAROLINE

(Speaking for the lobster, but in her regular voice.)

Caroline's sure she's very sorry. She wants to know if you'll be nice and play with her.

(Pause. MARIE turns around and to her surprise there's a lobster in her face.)

MARIE

You're not funny.

CAROLINE

You love lobster, don't you?

MARIE

You're getting it all over the rug.

CAROLINE

No I'm not, Mummy. He isn't even wet.

(Pause.)

MARIE

You'd better put it in water before it dies.

CAROLINE

Oh, I'm gonna put him in water all right. Tail first.

MARIE

You're supposed to cook them head first. So they die quicker.

CAROLINE

I know, Mummy, but he's been very naughty. Trust me.

MARIE

I don't know where you come from.

CAROLINE

It's all in good fun. Don't you want to have some fun?

(MARIE doesn't answer.)

CAROLINE

Decide. Do you want to have fun or not?

(Beat.)

It's a pretty easy decision.

LIA

How do you like my game?

(MARIE looks to CAROLINE.)

MARIE

How many did you get?

CAROLINE

Three. One for each of us.

MARIE

Lucky can't eat that, Caroline. She's on an IV.

CAROLINE

(Facetiously.)

What if we put him in a blender? Will she be able to eat him then?

MARIE

I'll assume that was supposed to be funny.

CAROLINE

(To lobster.)

You are a little scavenger.

(To LUCKY.)

Think of your existence, Mummy, if it was your birthright to be eaten . . . and a pot of boiling water was your inevitable fate.

MARIE

That's just gruesome.

CAROLINE

Well, I suppose we should get to it.

(To lobster, smiling.)

Don't be scared, my friend. Oh, he needs a name.

MARIE

Oh, Caroline--

CAROLINE

Steve's a good name for him.

MARIE

Steve isn't a lobster's name.

CAROLINE

Why not?

(Sarcastically.)

I know plenty of lobsters named Steve. It's a common enough name, you know.

MARIE

Don't name it if you're going to kill it. Oh! I can't be a part of this.

CAROLINE

You won't have to, Mummy. I insist on doing all the boiling.

MARIE

Just get it out of here.

CAROLINE

All right.

(To lobster.)

Any last words, Steve?

(She puts the lobster up to her ear.)

He has nothing to say, as usual.

MARIE

You're Lucky's granddaughter, that's for sure.

CAROLINE

If you're so offended, why are you smiling?

MARIE

I'm smiling because I'm afraid of you.

CAROLINE

Well, you'd better learn quick, Mummy.

MARIE

Maybe you can teach me.

(CAROLINE puts the lobster on the floor.)

CAROLINE

Steve, will you follow me to the chambers . . .

MARIE

Get out of here with that thing!

CAROLINE

(Playfully, she twirls around.)

"Where might I get a bite to eat," asked the shark of the shark . . .

KEITH

Lots of memories in this house, huh Caroline?

(Pause. CAROLINE playfully goes to her mother and takes her hands.)

LIA

Down, down, down . . .

CAROLINE

When I was little, Lia taught me this game--

MARIE

(Breaking loose.)

Oh, no. Forget it.

CAROLINE

Mummy--

MARIE

I don't want to know.

CAROLINE

It's a game . . . for fun.

MARIE

Fun to you and Lia was not fun to most people.

CAROLINE

Just let me show you. If you don't like it, you don't have to play.

(She holds her hands out to MARIE.)

It's fun. Let me show you.

(After a pause, MARIE goes to CAROLINE and tentatively takes her hands. The two walk around in a circle. SIMON, KEITH and JAMIE start filtering into the scene. Their pace gradually quickens until CAROLINE and MARIE are spinning, holding onto one another. CAROLINE can take her time with this speech.)

CAROLINE

This little game always made her feel better.

SIMON

Sing me a song, Caroline.

CAROLINE

She would hold my hands . . .

KEITH

I came to see you, Caroline.

CAROLINE

Just like this . . .

JAMIE

We could go to a judge--

CAROLINE

And we'd swim around and around in a circle.

SIMON

Must be nice to have someone who understands you--

CAROLINE

Usually we'd sing or recite a rhyme or sometimes nothing at all.

KEITH

You used to like me.

CAROLINE

And we'd swim in this small circle so fast and with so much ease . . .

JAMIE

It's time, Caroline.

CAROLINE

I can't remember any waves or rain or anything.

KEITH

Remember when you used to like me?

CAROLINE

We'd swim and swim and swim . . .

SIMON

Bet you're not too big to sit on my lap.

CAROLINE

Until we didn't have to swim anymore.

JAMIE

C'mon, Caroline.

CAROLINE

And we'd keep going, just like this, underwater . . .

KEITH

Don't be afraid.

CAROLINE

And then farther down, where nothing could touch her.

SIMON

Why don't we go down the beach--

JAMIE

Tell me why you won't marry me.

SIMON

Just you and me.

CAROLINE

No one could hurt her, nothing was real anymore.

KEITH

Lots of memories in this house, huh Caroline?

CAROLINE

And then farther and farther. I don't remember holding my breath, I don't remember any struggle, just farther down. Spinning, spiraling, down, down, down! Down, down, down . . .

(MARIE joins in with CAROLINE. The two are laughing, strangely enjoying themselves. The sound of wind grows louder.)

MARIE & CAROLINE

Down, down, down . . . Down, down, down . . . Down, down, down . . .

(MARIE and CAROLINE collapse on the floor. SIMON, KEITH, and JAMIE exit. Slowly the laughter subsides, and reality sets in. The women have a long moment together, nearly a scene, completely still and without words.)

CAROLINE

It's time.

(JAMIE enters.)

LIA

They had not considered upon her creation the strife she would endure from existing in two divergent worlds.

(MARIE gives CAROLINE a look. MARIE picks up the bucket with the lobster and walks off.)

LIA

The water nymph soon discovered that acts of true love are not without their sacrifices.

(CAROLINE looks at JAMIE playfully.)

CAROLINE

Can I cut your hair?

JAMIE

If you insist.

(Kneeling behind him, she combs his hair with her fingers,
preparing to cut it.)

LIA

But he had also given a part of himself. And while at any moment she could flee to the safeness of the deep sea, the man had no escape.

CAROLINE

When are you going to trust me?

LIA

"To whom do I belong?"

(She begins to snip away.)

JAMIE

Have you noticed any change with Lucky?

CAROLINE

She hasn't even opened her eyes.

JAMIE

I hope something happens soon.

LIA

"To whom do I belong?" But being only human, he could not understand.

CAROLINE

Something will happen.

JAMIE

What do you mean by that?

CAROLINE

Something has to happen. It's only natural.

JAMIE
How do you know?

CAROLINE
Sit still. You're making me mess up.

JAMIE
Answer my question, Caroline.

CAROLINE
Well . . . What I mean is, Lucky won't be asleep forever. She'll open her eyes or . . .

JAMIE
She won't.

CAROLINE
Don't move your head so much.

LIA
"Is it you? Is it me? Or do I belong to the sea?"

JAMIE
Have you thought about it?

CAROLINE
What?

JAMIE
If . . .

CAROLINE
No.

JAMIE
Do you really believe . . .

CAROLINE
Everything has its time.

JAMIE
But you said she--

CAROLINE
You're always looking to solve things, Jamie. You can never just be still.

JAMIE

One thing I never understood. The way you and Lucky would just sit with each other for hours and hours and never speak.

CAROLINE

Who says we never spoke?

JAMIE

I never heard you.

CAROLINE

No . . . that's true.

JAMIE

You had that way with her. You just knew.

(Beat.)

Why . . . Why do you think it's you, Caroline?

CAROLINE

Why me?

JAMIE

Yeah. I mean, do you think it's the same with your mother.

CAROLINE

No. My mother never really got it. But she's beginning to . . .

JAMIE

So, why you? Why not . . . me, I mean.

CAROLINE

Perhaps . . .

JAMIE

Go on.

CAROLINE

It's like . . . the ocean, Jamie. You can't explain it.

JAMIE

I can explain it.

CAROLINE

Explain the tides.

The moon. Science.

JAMIE

Just let it be.

CAROLINE

I don't know if I get it.

JAMIE

You don't have to anymore.

CAROLINE

What does that mean?

JAMIE

Nothing.

CAROLINE

Did Uncle Simon tell you about the house?

JAMIE

What.

CAROLINE

He found a buyer.

JAMIE

He what?

CAROLINE
(She stops what she's doing.)

Keith told me. I thought you knew--

JAMIE

Is the house sold?

CAROLINE

Basically.

JAMIE

Oh . . .

CAROLINE

You and I will share everything, Keith.

SIMON

JAMIE

I've done a lot of thinking--

CAROLINE

(Very panicked.)

I . . . I don't know what to do . . .

JAMIE

Well, that's the thing. I have something worked out, Caroline.

CAROLINE

Lucky might as well be dead.

JAMIE

I think I have a solution--

CAROLINE

Can you stop Uncle Simon from selling?

JAMIE

No.

CAROLINE

Then you don't have a solution.

JAMIE

Caroline . . .

(He takes her hand in effort to get her attention.)

I've saved some money . . .

CAROLINE

Can you buy the house?

JAMIE

Not that much money.

CAROLINE

Jamie . . . What am I going to do?

JAMIE

I thought--

CAROLINE

You said he hasn't sold it yet, right?

I don't know. Caroline, listen--

JAMIE

I need to speak to him.

CAROLINE

I have a plan--

JAMIE

I need the key--

CAROLINE

I thought we could get a place.

JAMIE

(Beat.)

CAROLINE

What.

JAMIE

You and me. We could live there . . . together. You have no place to live, right? So that wouldn't look strange to people. And with this house sold, it wouldn't be so weird for me to buy a house of my own.

CAROLINE

Where?

JAMIE

I thought, maybe, across the bridge--

CAROLINE

No. It has to be here.

JAMIE

I could never afford--

CAROLINE

Jamie, it has to be this beach.

JAMIE

Maybe it's time to let it go.

CAROLINE

Let what go, exactly?

The past. JAMIE

No. CAROLINE

Think about it. We could finally be together. No one would even question it. JAMIE

Jamie . . . CAROLINE

(He looks to her eagerly.)

What am I going to do with Lucky? CAROLINE

Lucky can live with us. JAMIE

Lucky can't live off of this beach. CAROLINE

Sure she can-- JAMIE

You don't know what you're talking about! You have no idea how important this is! CAROLINE

Yes I do-- JAMIE

I came to see you, Caroline. KEITH'S VOICE

No. Obviously you don't. CAROLINE

Will you at least think about it? JAMIE

I'll always think about it. CAROLINE

JAMIE

Good . . . Whatever that means.

(Pause.)

CAROLINE

Jamie . . . I need to talk to you about something.

JAMIE

Okay . . .

CAROLINE

Something that happened in this house . . .

KEITH'S VOICE

Don't you like that, Caroline?

JAMIE

You can tell me.

CAROLINE

It . . . it happened when I was a little girl.

JAMIE

What happened.

KEITH'S VOICE

They can't hear you.

CAROLINE

It . . .

JAMIE

Does it involve someone else?

CAROLINE

Yes.

JAMIE

A man?

KEITH'S VOICE

Trust me.

CAROLINE

Yes.

Tell me. JAMIE

I can't. It's so bad. CAROLINE

Then tell me what I'm thinking is wrong. JAMIE

I think you're right. CAROLINE

Who was it. JAMIE

I can't tell you. CAROLINE

Do I know him? JAMIE

I . . . I can't tell you. CAROLINE

I'd kill him. JAMIE

I know. That's why I don't want you to know. CAROLINE

Jesus . . . I'm so sorry. JAMIE

So am I. Sorry for you, I mean. CAROLINE

For me? JAMIE

I want to be with you more than anything. But I can't. Not with this . . . CAROLINE

Tell me who it was. JAMIE

JAMIE

Will you tell me . . . ?

CAROLINE

If I can.

(Beat.)

Go on.

LIA

They'd managed to stay on course for the greater part of the voyage, but one night perilous winds forced the vessel steadfast towards a cliff. Everyone was sure to be drowned. When all of a sudden a sweet voice sang out of the darkness, and at the base of the cliff a young mermaid appeared, her golden tail catching the moonlight as she splashed against the waves.

(CAROLINE pauses for a moment, and then begins singing a familiar-sounding sultry and melodic tune. Her voice is high, soft, and beckoning. Lights rise on SIMON, sitting in his chair, clearly growing more and more entranced by CAROLINE's crooning.)

SIMON

Caroline?

(CAROLINE continues her song as she makes her way towards SIMON. She is eventually joined by LIA, and the two finish their tune in a haunting duet. SIMON takes a moment to catch his breath and applauds for CAROLINE.)

SIMON

I knew you'd come around! Come sit by me!

(CAROLINE kneels by his side.)

Now I am happy.

(CAROLINE smiles at him.)

Tell me a story.

CAROLINE

A story . . .

(Beat. She smiles to herself and then proceeds slowly and carefully.)

Once upon a time, in the near and recent past, a girl was born to two different worlds.

LIA

To whom do I belong?

CAROLINE

To the naked eye she was a girl, like any other girl, with all the usual facets and fixtures, but most didn't realize that her soul actually belonged to the sea. Every day she would look down at her long human legs and small feet and wonder why she was sentenced to suffer day after day after day.

SIMON

Was she sad all the time?

CAROLINE

For her there existed one special place where she could lose everything she knew about being on shore, a place where in all her thoughts and being she was as light as air. A place of eternal bliss and absolute nonexistence.

LIA

To whom do I belong?

SIMON

Where?

CAROLINE

In the sea.

SIMON

The sea?

CAROLINE

She had no choice. The sea would call to her, and she would have to go. She allowed the waves to caress her, and tell her soft stories to make her fall asleep. Do you know how that feels? Do you?

(SIMON shakes his head.)

It's love. They handled each other with the utmost care. She was never alone when she was there. She was always with someone who loved her.

(Beat.)

The sea had been singing to the girl her whole life, but one day it called in a very different way. "You can free yourself," it said, "come lay beneath me."

LIA

To whom do I belong? Is it you? Is it me?

CAROLINE

She had no choice. She went into the water and swam as far out as she could. Then, she lifted her arms up to the sun, and plunged down.

LIA

Down, down, down . . .

CAROLINE

She laughed the sweetest laugh . . .

(Beat.)

And was swallowed by the great, blue ocean.

LIA

Down, down, down . . .

CAROLINE & LIA

Down, down, down . . .

CAROLINE

Do you know what she found? True happiness. She found true happiness deep, deeper down than you could ever imagine.

SIMON

What was down there?

CAROLINE

A palace. A castle of riches. Every girl is queen, every man is king. Everything is new and beautiful, soft and fresh.

SIMON

Isn't it dark down there?

CAROLINE

The water's as clear as glass. The sun pours down in bright, white streams.

SIMON

Wasn't she very cold?

CAROLINE

Everything is warm, very warm. And the feeling of fullness and delight is so strong that it warms every last part of you. And she had it for all of eternity. To win this gift, all she had to say was 'yes'. There was no sacrifice.

SIMON

No sacrifice . . .

CAROLINE

No sacrifice. She'd returned to the land where she belonged. A land where there's no death or pain or hurt or despair.

SIMON

No sacrifice . . .

CAROLINE

Adorned by jewels and silk and gold and--

SIMON

No death or pain--

CAROLINE

All sparkles and glimmers, shimmers and shines.

CAROLINE & LIA

Blue, blue, blue--

CAROLINE

All the way down.

LIA

Blue, blue, blue . . .

CAROLINE

All the way down . . .

SIMON

Diamonds and gold--

CAROLINE

The smell of all things sweet.

SIMON

Blue, blue, blue--

CAROLINE

No wind or sound.

SIMON

Streams of white--

LIA

Down, down, down . . .

CAROLINE

All is calm.

SIMON

No more pain.

CAROLINE

And never alone.

LIA

(Softly.)

Down, down, down . . .

CAROLINE

And warm. Very warm. Your heart is filled with overwhelming love.

(Beat.)

Come with me. I'll take you there.

SIMON

Do you know the way?

CAROLINE

Oh, yes.

SIMON

And you want to go with me?

CAROLINE

Nothing would please me more.

(Beat.)

Listen . . . Do you hear that?

LIA

(Whispering.)

Don't you want to play?

SIMON

I don't know what I hear.

LIA

(Whispering.)

Don't you want to play?

CAROLINE

It's calling your name.

(SIMON and CAROLINE look at one another. Pause.)

SIMON

What happened to the woman in your story? Did she drown?

CAROLINE

Drown? She didn't drown. She became an angel of the sea.

(CAROLINE gives SIMON a long, deep kiss on his cheek.
Lights fade.)

LIA

"Don't you remember me?
Look out here, out towards the sea.
We were friends once, you and I,
But so much time has drifted by.
The time had come for me to see
If you could still remember me."

"Yes. I do remember you
We were beautiful once, us two.
I remember my time with you
When, in this world, there's no more I can do.
I hesitate to tell you true
How much I remember my life with you."

"Forgive me for going so far away.
You had to know I'd be back one day.
I wouldn't have left you all alone
Surrounded by darkness and unknown.
For, all that beauty we explored
I have now eternally restored.
With all this life that you've endured,
Think of this as your just reward."

"Please understand why I must decline.
So much has happened in so little time.
And while things here get harder each day,
I've too many ties to go far away.
I am the strength of my family and home.
How could I leave them all alone?"

"I understand everything that you say,
But your family's all grown and gone far away.
The home that you speak of is not at all the same.
You knew that long before I came.
Don't tell them goodbye, just come with me.
Just walk out here, out toward the sea.
Think of the beauty of you and I,
It'll feel like no time has passed us by.
Now is the moment for you to choose."

LIA (Cont'd)

You may regret if you refuse.

Will you resign to a life that is lost?
Or submit to happiness at no risk or cost?
For a life more fulfilled, you must come to me.
I'll wait for you, out here in the sea."

(Finally, there is a calm and it is dawn. There is no one in sight. There is a great moment of stillness before JAMIE bursts into the house.)

JAMIE

Caroline! Caroline! Lucky! Lucky!
(He furiously searches.)

Lucky!

(CAROLINE appears before him. She is dripping wet and fully clothed. A glazed expression now covers her face. JAMIE looks at her for a moment as though he's seen a ghost, then he runs to her and grabs hold of her desperately.)

CAROLINE

(Calmly.)
Sshhh . . . Everything's all right.

JAMIE

Let's go, Caroline. Please . . .

CAROLINE

It's over, Jamie. I'm sorry.

JAMIE

No.

CAROLINE

Yes. I'm sorry.

JAMIE

What's happened to you?

CAROLINE

Go home now, Jamie.

(Pause. He does not move. Then, tenderly.)
It's time.

JAMIE
Caroline . . . Please.

CAROLINE
Go.

JAMIE
Please, Caroline!

CAROLINE
No, Jamie. You must leave now. Alone.

JAMIE
What have you done?

CAROLINE
Nothing, sweetie.

JAMIE
Why are you all wet?

CAROLINE
I was in the water.

JAMIE
What have you done?

CAROLINE
I told you. Nothing.

JAMIE
Where's Lucky?

CAROLINE
(Catching a glimpse out the window that startles her at first.)
It's time for you to go.

JAMIE
(Grabbing her.)
Where's Lucky!

CAROLINE
Why? Do you want your piece of the house? There's nothing left, Jamie. It's all gone.

JAMIE
What did you do! Where is she!

(CAROLINE does not respond. She simply touches JAMIE's face softly, then leans forward and, for the first time that we see, gently kisses him. They hold their kiss while LIA looks upon them.)

LIA

"Aren't I sure to freeze?"
The sailor called into the storm.
"Don't worry," the sea-girl sang back to him,
"My tears will keep you warm."

(JAMIE looks to CAROLINE with weepy eyes.)

JAMIE

What did you do, Caroline?

CAROLINE

(Pause.)

Do you know how much I love you?
(He does not respond.)
Do you?

JAMIE

Yes.

CAROLINE

Good. Leave now, Jamie.

JAMIE

But--

CAROLINE

No. Now. It's time.

(JAMIE painfully moves away from her. Just then, MARIE enters the house. She too is fully clothed and soaking wet. She's a bit shaken. She looks sadly at JAMIE.)

MARIE

Jamie . . .

JAMIE

Auntie . . . What . . . Where have you been?

MARIE
In the water, love.

JAMIE
What've you both been doing?

MARIE
Did you ask him here, Caroline?

CAROLINE
Yes, Mummy.

LIA
(Singing.)
You've got me in between
The Devil and the deep blue sea.

MARIE
(To JAMIE.)
If only things had been a little bit different . . .

CAROLINE
He has to go now, Mummy.

MARIE
Yes. You're right. That's best.

JAMIE
(Innocently, like a child.)
Where's Lucky?

(MARIE and CAROLINE pause for a moment and look at JAMIE.)

CAROLINE
Go now, Jamie. Come back for Lucky another day.

JAMIE
No. Tell me now.

MARIE
Caroline's right. Come back for Lucky another day. Be a good boy, now.

JAMIE
I'm not leaving.

CAROLINE
Yes. Yes, you will.

JAMIE
No. I won't.

MARIE
Yes. You will.

JAMIE
What have you done?

CAROLINE
(She points to the picture on the wall.)
Take that with you. No one will need it, now.

MARIE
What is it, Caroline?

CAROLINE
Me and Jamie . . . In another life.

MARIE
(Looking at the photo fondly.)
I remember that day. Do you, Jamie?

JAMIE
(Holding back tears.)
Yes.

MARIE
(Nonchalant.)
Who'd of thought things'd turn out the way they did. I never would've.

JAMIE
Where's Lucky?

(Suddenly, KEITH bursts in the door.)

KEITH
Where's Uncle Simon! Where is he!

MARIE
Keith!

CAROLINE

What's the matter, Keith? Still looking for the key to your lost kingdom?

(He strikes CAROLINE hard across the face.)

JAMIE

I'll kill you if you ever lay a hand on her again!

(JAMIE goes to console CAROLINE.)

MARIE

Just let it be for now.

CAROLINE

He'll never touch me again. Don't you worry.

KEITH

(To CAROLINE.)

What the fuck have you done! You monster! I should have killed you when I had the chance!

(CAROLINE and MARIE barely react. JAMIE makes a move for KEITH, but CAROLINE restrains him.)

CAROLINE

It's over. Don't bother with him. He's already through.

JAMIE

(To KEITH.)

Watch it.

MARIE

Don't let him get to you.

CAROLINE

It's over, Jamie. There's nothing else he can do.

KEITH

It's not over you little bitch! Where's Lucky!

CAROLINE

Gone.

MARIE

Caroline--

CAROLINE
It's okay, Mummy.

JAMIE
How is it okay, Caroline?

CAROLINE
It just is.

KEITH
Tell me where Lucky is!

CAROLINE
I'll tell you where she is. And you'll have to tell her that her only son is dead.

JAMIE
Uncle Simon?

MARIE
He's dead? Well, God bless him then.

KEITH
Simon . . .

CAROLINE
You look a little pale, Keith.

JAMIE
Just what the hell is going on here.

KEITH
Uncle Simon's dead, little brother. And your little fuck over there killed him.

JAMIE
I mean it, Keith. Watch your mouth.

CAROLINE
Pay no mind. He's already lost.

KEITH
Lost? The house is mine. Simon already told me that he was going to leave the key to me.

CAROLINE
Where is it then? Do you have any proof?

KEITH

I don't need proof. This house is coming to me.

MARIE

The money is going to the state.

CAROLINE

(To KEITH.)

Sorry. You're wrong.

(LIA laughs.)

KEITH

I get the house! He promised me!

MARIE

Promised? Ha!

CAROLINE

He wanted to die with it and so he has.

JAMIE

Who gives a shit about the house! This isn't about the house anymore, Keith! How many people have to die before you figure it out! Forget about the god-damned house!

KEITH

Don't need to, buddy. The house is mine.

CAROLINE

Yeah. And your key's floating around the great Atlantic somewhere.

MARIE

(Quite sternly.)

This was my mother's house. Don't you ever forget it.

KEITH

This house belonged to your mother's husband who left it to his son. And he wanted to leave the house to me. This house belonged to Grandpa, Uncle Simon, and now me. That's the way it is.

JAMIE

(To KEITH.)

The house and the beach belong to no one. It's all been sold. It'll probably get torn down.

CAROLINE

(Still focused on KEITH.)

This is our house. Lucky did everything she could to appease you because she loved you, in spite of the fact that you were born senseless! She tried to help you! Don't you get it? She lied to you because she loved you. She lied to you because she knew that you would believe her. And that you needed to be lied to. She knew that you and Simon and your father were all born with less. And still she tried to love you the same. She knew that all you needed was to be taken care of.

(She looks to JAMIE with pity.)

Even you, Jamie. She saw it in you too.

(JAMIE bows his head humbly.)

KEITH

What are you talking about? Are you saying that Lucky pitied me? That's fucking ridiculous!

JAMIE

It's true, Keith. You didn't see it, but I did. She loved us, though. I knew that too.

MARIE

You especially, Jamie. She knew that you were a good boy.

KEITH

What is this! Jamie are you listening to them!

JAMIE

They're telling the truth.

KEITH

She killed Simon.

CAROLINE

Me?

KEITH

I know you, Caroline. I know what you can do.

CAROLINE

I haven't done anything. The last time I saw Uncle Simon he was sitting on his throne, listening to me tell him a story, as happy as a clam. All smiles. When I left I kissed him on the cheek. His cheek was warm. Very warm. That was the last time I saw him. And I did not kill him.

JAMIE

Is that the truth?

Yes.

CAROLINE

And you believe her?

KEITH

Caroline's never told a lie.

MARIE

I believe you, Caroline.

JAMIE

Of course you do. You're the one who's fucking her.
(Turns to MARIE.)
Did you know that? Did you know that your daughter has been screwing her cousin?
Your nephew? It's pretty sick, Marie. That's incest by most people's standards.
(MARIE does not flinch.)
Can hardly believe it, can you?

(Slight pause.)

MARIE

Tell me something I don't know, Keith.

KEITH

Sick . . . The whole fucking lot of you . . .

MARIE

And could you please try and watch your language. You are, after all, in my mother's house.

KEITH

It's my house.

CAROLINE

It's Lucky's house. Don't make me have to tell you again.
(Slight pause.)
Go get Lucky and we'll settle this.

KEITH

Lucky's awake?

MARIE

Not now, Caroline.

Yes. Now, Mummy.

CAROLINE

I'm ready.

JAMIE

What!

KEITH

Lucky is down the beach.

CAROLINE

She's down the beach?

KEITH

Where else should she be?

MARIE

Caroline, don't tell me--

JAMIE

This is Lucky's house.

CAROLINE

This has always been Lucky's house.

MARIE

I would like to hear you acknowledge that this is Lucky's house, Keith.

CAROLINE

Not on your life!

KEITH

A long time ago you disowned this house and you didn't even know it, Keith.

CAROLINE

Fuck you.

KEITH

Not on your life.

CAROLINE

Is Lucky really down the beach.

KEITH

CAROLINE

I told you. She's in the water.
(Slight pause.)
With the key.

KEITH

What the hell did you do?

(CAROLINE looks at him with an innocent smile. KEITH runs out of the house. JAMIE is now the one who is frightened.)

JAMIE

Caroline . . . Is it true?

CAROLINE

Yes.

JAMIE

All of it?

CAROLINE

Yes.

JAMIE

I believe you.

CAROLINE

Jamie . . . It was Keith.

JAMIE

Keith.

CAROLINE

Yes.

CAROLINE

It was him.

(JAMIE calmly exits out the front door. There is a long pause while the two women peer casually out the front of the house, towards the beach.)

MARIE

What do we do now?

CAROLINE

Sit and wait.

MARIE

I do hope Jamie doesn't spend too long on the beach, the waves will pick him up and take him right to China.

CAROLINE

Don't worry, Mummy. Everything'll be all right.

MARIE

You sure, Caroline.

CAROLINE

I promise.

(Pause.)

LIA

Who would be a mermaid fair,
Singing alone, combing her hair,
Under the sea, in a golden curl,
With a comb of pearl,
On a throne?

I would be a mermaid fair.
I would sing to myself the whole of the day;
With a comb of pearl I would comb my hair;
And still as I comb'd I would sing and say,

LIA (Cont'd)

"Who is it loves me? Who loves not me?"

And all the mermen under the sea
Would feel their immortality
Die in their hearts for the love of me.

END OF PLAY.

About the Playwright

Liza Lentini's surrealistic drama *Drowning in Euphoria* received an extended Off-Broadway run at the McGinn/Cazale Theatre in 1999 where it was hailed by Showbusiness Weekly as "poignant and haunting...almost musical".

Other favorite productions include: *The Euthanasist* (Manhattan Rep), *The Gentleman Caller* (Women's Project & Chicago Dramatists), *Psychotic & Weird (but enough about me)* (American Theatre of Actors, NYC & London), *Life in Exodus* (Milagro Theatre), *Brain Children* (Rubicon Theatre Project, Chicago) and *The Low Road to Phoenix* (Actor's Workshop, Boston).

Liza is the Creative Director of Elephant Ensemble Theater (www.elephanttheater.com), a company that brings children's theatre to NYC hospitals, and has also written their inaugural production of *Thumbelina: The Story of a Brave Little Girl*. She was proudly named Manhattan Repertory Theatre's 2007 Playwright in Residence.

Liza holds an MFA in Playwriting from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. For more information, please visit www.lizalentini.com.