From the Wreckage

by

Tania Carter

A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Theatre Studies

Guelph, Ontario, Canada
© Tania Carter, March, 2013
ABSTRACT

FROM THE WRECKAGE

Tania Carter
University of Guelph, 2013

Advisors:
Judith Thompson
Alan Filewod

This thesis is an investigation of processes involved in the praxis of Tseil-Waututh knowledge systems, stemming from the longhouse and its value to people of Tsleil-Wauth nation in structure and to people in content and delivery. I journeyed through the process of writing a performance from a dance, the Swan Dance. It was under Len George’s care and through this process that I learned to reflect and thus, revalue my body, mind and heart. I learned to love song and sound and to sense my relatives unconscious being, here in Toronto. I felt a sense of community, consciously, unprecedented in my adult life, except in one-on-one relations with siblings and my mother and in reflection. In reflection, I could not name this process, this understanding, but in spurts of words and recollections. It is in this light that the value of Tseil-Waututh dance and its process of learning came. I turned the light onto this process and the light reflected back onto me, its birth and journey and my participation inside of it. It has inspired a writer to help stop the violence against women, by showing a purpose to, through a belief in tradition. Out emerged a people, warm and beautiful, dancing and singing and speaking.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manifesto</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Wreckage</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

My lineage and my maternal great uncle and his father, my paternal grandma, both spirits I called into the room when I was working, her for guidance and him for direction. Her nurturing spirit calming me as the frenzy of emotion came into my being. Doors I never saw opened, since I was a child and I never knew then what they were, flew open and swallowed me, challenged me to look into myself and the system, its realities and the people. A place I rarely visited. If it wasn’t for my honesty, I would be a dreamer, one of those ones that travels north and believes they can survive on shrubs and rain water. With my grandma Marion Bobb, I could walk through the door with calm and ease of mind that I would make it out, though the road might be tough and rough and with great uncle Leonard George I could live this dream of dancing my way into the master’s thesis, the light, that I had held onto since a child, that the world is full of beauty. I thank my mother for her powerful words, encouraging me to stay me and adhere to my beliefs and my sister saying, that I could do anything, “You wrote the damn parliament to get your student loans paid; you can do anything!” Shandra Spears, brought my poetry to light, even if all that was left was one line. I would write from it and my spirit would light up. Finally but not less importantly, I thank my daughter for her honesty and endless optimism and belief in my work. “Just write your way through it. You can write your way through it.” Still haunts me, her expression of authentic self and my life meaning so much, capturing my heart and the profound intent of the play, in her 19 year old body. Such youth, such vigour! Just do it! Life will come along!
Manifesto:

There is no differentiation between the fantasy and reality in Tsleil-Waututh culture. Therefore, in the performance of this play, there is no difference between the stage and the longhouse; from where I take this story and where it begins. It is neither in my imagination nor in the universe waiting to be taken. It is both. It was born and turned into this beautiful plume from the cosmos and through my mind and heart.

If I listened just to myself I would not have heard this beauty song and I would have rested my pencil and my hands from these keys or told a thousand tales with controlled endings. This story told me to write about beauty, and not to forsake the pit that sometimes sits before it. I am in escape and in reality, running on land and water, past trees, swooping through treetops and bridging earth and sky with wings spread and webbed feet tucked in. In this performance a woman dresses as swan and a swan, that represents woman swims bridging gaps between reality and fantasy and human and animal. Hard work, energy, enthusiasm and deep compassion, spurn these characters on. The actors are dancers and vice versa. To understand this script, one must understand the characters, changing from dancer to bird and actor to dancer.

Swan in its biological structure and it is full of integrity in relation to everything. It makes valiant efforts to be protective, caring, clean and healthy. The metamorphosis of man into creature and woman into bird resound from the innards of swan’s life, in this play. The essence of swan will always alude us, but its teachings are profound and open people up to sight and sound and belief, beyond the human realm. Humans don’t know everything. Humans cannot decide what is innate or unconscious. The swan dance speaks to this sensibility. The swan protects and hurts other beings out of protection, on the other hand people sometimes premeditates hurt. Out of this ability to conceptualize and revenge, negative behaviour becomes experience and is brought into memory. It is the animal world that teaches that negative behaviour is non-consensual for children and other beings.

In potlatch expressed through dance, oratory and song, the tradition speaks to memory from an emotional, intellectual and physical standpoint, in a place born of respect and integrity. A system of communal health emerges, in a strict process of sharing and caring, expressed through and exhibition of skill sets, evaluated by community. It is through the natural world and the strict systems of the potlatch that the violent behaviour of people is managed, dealt with and disciplined or for the more plain language speakers, taken care of. I believe for intents and purposes of this paper, my primary belief is that people need to be come more sensitized and make choices and act on those choices now. I follow the process of beauty, so the details of violence are not glorified or insulting to its victim. It is easier on the mind to see a swan having trouble than a teenager. Though the girl is shown being violated, the swan takes away from the ugliness of it. The story is focused on elements of the swan that are intriguing and attractive and empowering, as in the women. This balance in itself is beautiful, as achievement of learning and integrity is innate in every human being, whether or not they actually do what their heart and minds want is another story.
I am leaving the doors open for the stage designer to move inside reality and fantasy in this play, which involves water, a studio, a forest and women’s minds and men’s actions and choices. Whether the lighting or media showers this play with the elements that will show my attempt to inform this story, is not my concern. My focus is the story and how the characters tell it through movement and language. The movement like the setting is based on longhouse ceremony of the Tsleil-Waututh people. From what I have learned the ‘summer’ dances are rooted in longhouse dances. The ambience of longhouse dances were dark except for the incessant fire that sat in the centre. The people, sat around the fire, giving enough room for the dancer to dance. There is closeness in the positioning of people in the traditional Tsleil-Waututh dance that is unlike Western performance audience seating. This is what I want captured and done in the performance of this production. Audience sits within feet of the dancers, all around in a circle, for all possibilities of closeness to be used. For the audience to feel they are important to the dancer to the performance. Therefore all the setting I have sought to elaborate on in this written performance piece can change drastically with the expertise of a set designer, as long as this sensibility of closeness of staging is captured.

The traditional drum mentioned throughout the script is always a log drum as used on the West Coast in potlatch, in pre-colonial times. The sound simulations, voice-overs and musical recordings need to be synchronized with the movements, monologues and dialogues, echoing the connectivity and importance of dance, music, oratory, and poetry in Tsleil-Waututh culture. For Tsleil-Waututh culture to be represented, all its parts need to be represented as they are in tradition. It is through a focused knowledge system of art and science that reality can be made to reflect fantasy and vice versa. The making of the paddle shirt and the reflections of the moonlight off the dancer, while wearing the shirt onstage, is an important as the dance itself. The swan was beautiful, regal in the most literal sense. A clean, new or at least very well taken-care of shirt needs to be worn. Optimum health is a fantasy until a person starts running, gets past the ten mile a day mark and the fantasy becomes a reality. Water in the form of ocean and rain need to be the eminent characteristics of the setting, the sound and the way people move on stage. The poems drift over the action like water, unless a dire emotion changes it. The poems and the way they are spoken are in reflection of elements, not necessarily water. There are many very clear connections to water already in the script, thus a little less care can be taken in the focus on water in the saying of the words in the script. Sometimes the drama of the moment can change the poems rhythm or tone, as in every spoken word. It is fully up to the director and his technical advisors.

It is up to the set designer and technical personnel to use lighting and multi-media to embody the fluidity of the ‘real’ and natural settings mentioned in the script. I wanted the lighting to play an eminent role in the simulation of bushes, night, trees, moon and moonlight and other parts of the landscape. There are projections of the lake and ocean and moon to show nightfall and their location and final destination.

The performance starts with no sound, then the slow clicking of wood on wood, traditional West Coast Salish drumming is heard for the first minute, then guitar by Arthur Renwick comes in; from his song called, “Hurtin’ Country Song”, with no gap between this and the traditional music. Renwick’s song has low undertones like a Salish voice, singing a traditional song. I want undertones of contemporary music, while representing traditional flavours, particular to Tsleil-Waututh people. Surla is doing traditional movement drawn
from the middle part of the Swan Dance, in an extended version of the swan flying. At different intervals Surla gives the swan's personality to the audience and Niomee advances this show of grace, intimacy, gentleness, curves and protectiveness and aggression in swan personalities and environment's that show these qualities.

The whole feeling of this piece is water and waves, shown through movement, consistency and depth. Their dance begins with one spotlight, dark everywhere else. The light represents the sun and moonlight and in essence a light of unconsciousness that burns in everyone and the spirit of relationship, of parents, their shared parent or their other parent. They are both dressed in black tights and there is a lot of shadow below them. They start slowly and build up speed and complexity. They are both entranced by and committed to their bodies, space and swans. The sounds they make are human, but have an unearthly quality to them. This comes from the state of Salish dance and how it affects its dancers.

As history is drawn from forefathers it is Tsleil-Waututh belief that what a child is, stems from parents and adults have choice. Tsleil-Waututh culture is strict, the whole body must be respected. The body needs to sweat, then it needs to be moved. There is no separation between acting and dancing they both serve parts of who the people are. Stepping into the longhouse a dancer represents an animal, unless they are trying to find their song and dance and 'winter' dance and that is private. People are able to emulate and embody the swan, in body, emotion, and intellect through our mind and heart and see into its deeper senses, as the performer’s are employed. In the first dance, Niomee is portrayed as youthful and somewhat naïve, though she’s been dancing contemporary dance since she was 3. As the performance progresses, as in ‘real’ life she changes, she become a women, yet this perception is from her actions and mind sets after trauma. She confronts and sees herself as independent and whole despite no parents. All this action and emotionality/inaction are highlighted by the lack of light changes and the bareness of the stage.

Surla does traditional movement drawn from her mother and literally, from the middle part of the Swan Dance (fantasy, a human bird), which is an extended version of the swan flying (reality), showing how swans use their wings and how they learn to fly and in human reality how we learn to fly in our hearts and minds. Removing the limits of human and bird, also removes the limits of the fantasy and reality, of flying without wings or living as a human with wings. This in itself represents a removal of boundaries or limits people might put on themselves or others. Through dance, the boundaries and barriers are lifted from the body and the mind is set free!

At different intervals Surla gives the swan's personality in her protective and aggressive behaviour/movements to the audience and Niomee advances this show in the personality of her swan in grace, intimacy, gentleness, in curves and acts of protectiveness, sometimes emulating the enviroment they are in, as swan. Niomee, grace and beauty is dancing over Surla, who sets the rhythm and tone of the dance. Surla is the grounding element of the pair. They start slowly and build up speed and complexity. They are both entranced by and committed to swan, swan's integrity. They are swans for all intents and purposes, though they are humans and women and First Nation, and dancers.
Everything about them needs to be considered in the making of the piece, however when the dance is performed it is their bodies that make the piece live. The strength, effort, beauty, musculature, skin colour, drama, nuance and connotation, comes through them. The sounds they make are human, but unearthly. There is a root in Tsleil-Waututh dance that is always dealing with the fantastic and this element is the ritual of going beyond reality, reaching beyond the real, its limits of conventionality and spreading yourself, flying to the other side, to this ‘unreal’ place. I happen to believe this unreal is real and in Tsleil-Waututh history, in simpler terms story, it is too. Spirits don’t live where we live, if they are put to rest properly. Humans can cross this line. The body has no limits, so there are no limits to the mind and the body in space. People can survive the most terrible past, then they can see past their moment in time and relish another. Then is the moment that is untangible and flexible. People can permeate through time and time is space, so space too. The mind is attracted to things that are beautiful, to unblock it, they are attracted to people that unblock it. Together swan and women are the best of both, beauty in aggression, self-care all represented in movement. It is in the doing life becomes important. Tseil-Waututh are made to move. The set, the movement, the poetry, the characters, their voices all must be beautiful or why would they/actors or audience be there. I insist on in this in the performance and I need to keep its integrity and beauty is Tsleil-Waututh.
From the Wreckage

Characters

Niomee a 16 year old ballet dancer, 2nd child of Joe Dimerone, an Irish and Cree/Salish man and his 2nd wife, Nancy is French. Niomee is tall and her hair is red with copper highlights and it is in a ponytail centered at the back of her head. She is brown like honey. She wears a crème trench coat and canvas tennis shoes over her black full body tights. She is light hearted and generous.
Dancer: Swan

Surla Niomee’s half sister, 33 years old, 1st child to Joe Dimerone, and was raised by her Salish mother, Tyan. Her hair is brown and her skin is slightly darker than Niomee’s, like maple syrup. She wears her hair down. She wears a white shirt and tan pants with a few rips in her running shoes. Underneath she wears full black tights. Surla is serious and suspicious.
Dancer: Swan

Orator Speaks in poetry.

Costumes: All these men wear leather wool varsity bombers. They are coming back from final-game-of-the-season party.

Chad a 19 year old, Cree and Scottish college varsity football player, defense.
Dancer: Tree
Dancer: Water

Collin a 22 year old, Jamaican and German college varsity football quarterback.
Dancer: Tree
Dancer: Water

Jacko a 22 year-old, Italian college varsity football captain.
Dancer: Tree
Dancer: Water
Scene 1

Setting:
(Upstage surrounded by walls, shaped in a semi-ovoid shape. The curve from the sidewalls to the back wall is seamless. From the audience the exits or wings, as theatre people call them, cannot be seen. There is blue west coast art of an ovoid shaped face, painted on stage right wall. Stage right is blue and blends into the browns of the stage left walls/wings. The blue scheme leads into browns going towards stage left. There is a painting of a women shaped into a mountain on the stage left wall. The walls must be slanted a bit out towards downstage, so that the audience can see the paintings. During water scenes, water is projected on stage right wall and sometimes a tree and/or swan is projected on stage left wall.)

(A spotlight lights up to half-light, from above. Sound: Traditional log drum. Surla and Niomee are dressed in black, except for their feet and therefore form a small invisible pile on the floor in the spotlight. They are facing down, hiding their hands and feet.)

Opening

Orator:  Swirling down from the cosmos each letter drops into the ocean is swallowed
Waves ripples outwards, sound emerges, rising up,
Stepping out onto air
Dancing in the sky.
A string of words; floating above the bay, dancing sky down,
Dancing audiences closer,
Character after character, word after word, curving, sparkling
Images form popping bubbles, emanating sound,
Swirling tone
Following sensual swan
Floating, preening and drifting into pages,
Walking to land on
Webbed feet and legs long and slender meet
Woman turns feathers into hair, hovering on wind
Wings for arms, touching sand,
Sweeping swathes of sprinkles across the sky,

Taking this bird with her
Waist deep in water
She glances back at her old self,
Face changing from white to deep brown and back to white again,
Nose and lips and beak facing the same direction, together
Both of this land
Disappearing into the distance,
Into a horizon

Swimming in ocean together, water flowing through this land from one shore to another
Up onto riverbanks, they’re hanging onto roots
No one has been here, to this page, before.
A culture, invisible, appears in dance and words,
Full of movement and sound

Letters, fall off stars into crystals
Embodying cosmos
Descending down to clouds and off clouds into rain,
Bouncing on branches
Springing off glass surfaces,
Sifting sand
Dusting trees
Melting leaves, where they stand
Soaking back into earth,
Trickling through hills
Masses of drops gathering, ebbing splatters and pools into streams
And streams into rivers
Quenching sandbanks, feeding shorelines, returning to ocean’s thirst.

Letters pluck pools of memory and mystery,
Spilling them into story
Splashing faces and bodies onto forests
Retelling once forbidden words
Longhouse
Re-entry
Healing
Protection

Words sing hearts free,
To experience old story new.

Cleaning wounds
Washing horrors from shorelines
Masses of letters swim to the surface,
Picking up new intent,
To spark hearts

Breaking the surface
Sounds reverberate, shaking bars of cages
Imprisoning women

Opening locks put there by people
One day may this effort open hearts and minds to the value of women

A pen-woman atop computer keys
Morphing symbols into meaning, purpose and depth
Listen,
Respect,
Change,
Senses drive intellect and emotion, and naturally the body
Bottling collections of sound and motion,
Releasing images of beauty with the utmost integrity.

Characters and writer expressing, so every one of their cells listen and remembers this story, written in this city, for its women and men.

Poetry with Movement and Music

Spotlight fade and a slow traditional Tsleil-Waututh drum starts slow. The pile starts opening up slowly. The dark represents the sky/unknown and the spotlight, the sun/fire/known. There is a lot of shadow below them. The feeling is protection and nurturing. The tall form of a Niomee is seen first and she is above Surla.

Poem starts here. Everything is timed.

Surla does traditional movement drawn from the middle part of the Swan Dance (fantasy/the fantastic, a human bird), which is an extended version of the swan flying (reality), showing how swans use their wings (from birth through adulthood). At different intervals Surla gives the swan’s personality, protective and aggressive behaviour/movements. Niomee advances the show, by exhibiting the personality of the swan in its grace, intimacy, gentleness, in curves and acts of nurturing, emulating the environments in which this would happen (ie protecting children from predators, preening and swimming on and off water…ect).
The whole feeling of this piece is water and waves and love and depth. Niomee is folding over Surla, who sets the rhythm and tone of the dance. They start slowly and build up speed, complexity and intensity. They are both entranced by and committed to bodies, space and swans. The sounds they make are human, but have an unearthly quality, resounding the set/the play.

1st Phase of Dance:

Surla dances going toward the right and repeats the same movement to the other side. Surla as swan starts from the water, showing the inside of her wings, one side then the other. Opening one wing, gliding it over the air and doing the same with the other wing. Then together Surla and Niomee fly together. Surla leans up against Niomee’s embracing arms, then lowers and spreads her arms partially open (representing wingspan); she curves up into Niomee slightly open arms. They form an oval. Niomee starts slowly moving her body like she is just a baby bird moving, transitioning from a feeling of the air to water, rolling and bending her arms and
backward and forward, above. Surla also moves like a baby bird, determined to fly by transitioning from earth and fire, from slow movements to spinning in low positions on the spot. Surla’s feet move but never leave from her spot. Their wings grow, as each second passes, so Surla’s wings spread out more, emulating a larger bird. Surla represents physical strength and emotional persistence; her stances are low and grounded and get stronger as time passes. Niomee represents warmth and hope in her emulation of swan, so her movements are more airy and watery; her movement gets more turbulent and stormy. Niomee flutters mixed with some bending and running movements, around Surla, spontaneously embracing Surla without touching her and then doing back bends and a walk-overs, emulating the feeling of swan, transitioning from cygnet to adult and adult behaviour toward their young, nurturing, while Surla behaviour becomes more protective.

2nd Phase of Dance:

(There is a storm, so there are wind and rain sounds.)
A storm comes (lightning and thunder strikes). Quickly in time with the second thunder strike (lights come up), Niomee is positioned face-down, arms open, above Surla and Surla is facing down and looks like she is lifting and carrying the weight of the two below. They both roll over. Surla is facing up to Niomee’s back and Niomee facing up to the sky. (On one very loud sound of thunder) They separate, (two separate spotlights follow them to opposite sides of the stage) spinning away from each other and then they slow down to swirling, mirroring each other; they both raise their hands straight up and stop in a tableaux. (The spotlight on Niomee Fades to Black) and (Storm: rain and wind sounds fade out).

3rd Phase of Dance:

(There is still a spotlight on Surla.) She is in a low horse stance. As her right arm points straight forward, (she faces downstage) her left arm bend and draws back behind her, her hand leveling with her face, flat and fingers touching side by side. She slowly moves in a circle to the right, slowly to the beat of music. Hair hangs in front of her face. Without stopping and with fluidity, Surla switches arms, so she is doing the opposite with her left arm straightforward, this time and right arm bent behind her and slowly moving in a circle to the left. Her left foot just touches the dark. (Underneath her body is a lot of shadow). Niomee enters the spotlight Surla is in.

Niomee does a walkover, over her. As Surla goes into her second stance, Niomee turns, raises her arms and as Surla starts moving in her second stance, Niomee bends over Surla’s turning form, arms outstretched in a curve over her. Surla turns full circle, sweeping her arms upwards, 340 degrees. Niomee holds this pose until Surla finishes, facing the corner of stage right and upstage. Then she does into a handstand over Surla and holds it. Surla is fierce, as she slowly faces centre stage. Surla changes arms/direction to her left and switches legs for the opposite lunge position (left leg forward) and Niomee squats and places her hands around Surla as if protecting and nurturing her. Niomee’s hair is down and slides over her face naturally, so the audience barely sees it. Her expression is in her body. Niomee stands still and
then moves around shielding Surla. Surla moves steadily to the left with her left arm pointing towards the sky. The right arm is slightly bent and following the other like Niomee did when she was moving to the right. Her face slowly follows. Niomee slowly moves away, making the circle wider, as Surla spins. Niomee floats backwards, still facing Surla with her arms open in a semi circle facing Surla. Surla arms go in and out of the light. Niomee is out of the light, but the energy is still there. Her legs moving fast, her arms extended out and up. Surla stops in a lunge position and Niomee moves closer to her, holding two scarves. Niomee stops too in a lunge position and she passes Surla a scarf in her outstretched hand. Surla scoops it up and swoops her arms to the left, facing upstage (stage right). She then spreads both her arms, lowers into a squat, rises a small bit and soars in a wide half circle (ending, facing downstage).

(Music changes from traditional drum to Arthur Renwick’s guitar music. It starts right when Niomee rises and fades in, as Niomee gets closer to Surla. The music is a continuum of the Hurtin’ Country Song instrumental).

Niomee rises and then does a full cartwheel and follows Surla, but in a smaller circle, like a smaller bird. Surla folds into herself, like a cocoon or a baby bird centre stage, body facing audience (downstage). Niomee lowers herself to the floor too, but then flies off again a half circle just like before. Niomee then flaps her arms towards the outside of the circle while moving around until she (Niomee is centre downstage), facing the audience. She brings her hands up, as if to touch Surla, but changes her mind and she places her fists on the floor, lifting herself up into a handstand, holding it for a few seconds then goes back to standing position and turns away from Surla and stands still (stage left of Surla). Surla opens up her torso and then moves both arms to the left (stage right) and upwards, meanwhile her legs are moving from a 90-degree knee bend to feet close together, with knees bent. Surla is moves her feet slowly to the left, following her hands; she does this for about ten feet, she switches to doing the same movements but to her right (stage left) again ten feet. Surla stops at the edge of downstage. Niomee repeats this last portion of Surla’s dance (Black Out).

(Low floodlights fade up to a studio with a plain wooden floor. Door is upstage left. The two girls are panting and wiping their bodies with towels. Both sisters are wearing full body tights.)

Niomee: That was good.

Surla: Not perfect, but you were definitely fighting for it and we need to practice the makeup yet.

Niomee: It’ll be full moon.

Surla: Full moon? We need a bonfire to light that place up and it’s outside, night, no fire…no light. We need light or makeup.

Niomee: Okay, I was going to say he gave me money for it last night, but I felt funny about it, so I didn’t say anything.

Surla: Why?
Niomee: He gives me money all these years and never asks what I am doing with it? It’s like he just wants me out of the way.

Surla: It’s been years of training and he paid for it all and that studio, just to get you out of his hair? Don’t get ahead of yourself. He does a lot and all for you.

Niomee: I don’t want all that. All I want is his acknowledgement, now.

Surla: Without it you wouldn’t be where you are. We wouldn’t have met. Growing up is hard. He sees what you are doing, getting ready and all that. You are so trained, probably the most in the country.

Niomee: He never watches.

Surla: So?

Niomee: I want his praise.

Surla: I see.

(Niomee slips on a skirt and an overcoat over her dance suit and Surla puts on pants, a sweatshirt and jacket over hers. Surla has a big purse and Niomee a knapsack. They Exit. Black Out).

Scene 2

Setting:

(Soft rain sounds. Arthur Renwick’s Hurtin’ Country Song instrumental/ no lyrics plays and light comes up on the set. Surla and Niomee enter downstage right. They are at the edge of a natural conservation area, on the edge of a suburban neighbourhood in a tourist driven town. The natural conservatory of indigenous rain forest is done in abstract art of the Tsleil-Waututh people, on the right side and upstage walls. Traditional west coast art with a path, a street in front and a few gates are painted on the downstage walls, leading to houses. There are three coniferous trees downstage left, a little ditch lies in front of the row of trees. A winding path painted on the floor goes through the park. The upstage half is the park and downstage half is the Cul-de-sac, the street and three gates, two gates on the stage right side and one on the stage left side. Unseen, behind the gates are houses. All the gates are the same. Upstage are the thin street and a stop sign on the stage right side, between the park and the houses/gates. It’s just about dusk on a Friday evening. The park is about seven miles deep and 1 1/2 wide miles wide. About a mile from stage left is an ocean, about a half mile from stage right is a waterfall and on the back end of the park is a mountain, seven miles back.)
(Niomee and Surla enter stage left. Niomee turns and points to the park.)

Niomee: I know a short cut, straight through the park.

Surla: Lights out in 20.

Niomee: We don’t have to go right through park. We just go through there. It’ll take us 15 minutes. It saves us 35. Then we’ll be downtown in 15.

Surla: 15?

Niomee: Yup.

Surla: Okay. Did you tell your dad we’re going?

Niomee: Yup. He’s never home anyway though.

Surla: Niomee.

Niomee and Surla are frowning for different reasons.

Surla: Your ma worries.

Niomee: Come eat. Here’s some cookies. Do homework!

Surla: Come on, she cares.

Niomee: Two years, then out. Surla, it’s tough; feels lonely. I just want someone to talk to.

Then you came.

Surla: I did. Okay, you’re lovable.

Niomee: Sis, I mean it.

(They stop at a stop sign. They step off the curb Surla grabs Niomee’s arm as they cross the narrow street.)

Niomee: This way.

Surla: Okay.
(The two young women walk onto the path and into the park. Niomee starts wriggling around, Surla lets go and Niomee starts dancing. Surla claps. After a while she reaches into her purse for keys, she uses them to rattle a rhythm. They feel reassuring. It’s quiet.)

Niomee: Look, look! Did you see that?

Surla: Yup. *(She lets go of the keys).* It’s like I can hear the water and wind, already, right here in this spot, Tsleil-Waututh.

Niomee: Earth and flight, my insides feel like they are pouring out.

Surla: …Like a waterfall into a crystal pool.

*(Niomee dances, showing Surla “this pouring out”. Surla watches and laughs. Niomee is enwrapped in Surla’s accolades, jumping and swirling.)*


Another spotlight slowly goes up on three young men standing in a tight line, behind some trees, downstage left. Fade to black on the two girls. Men are all facing stage left.

Jacko: So she left me because I didn’t “take her out enough”.

Chad: What?

Jacko: What about the parties?

Chad: Maybe it’s ‘cause we lost.

Collin: Shut up.

Chad: What about her friend?

Collin: Waverly.

Chad: Waves all over.

Jacko: Oceans of dreams…..

Collin: Women.

*Jacko turns his head around and Chad does the same and Collin, stops and listens. They hear Niomee.*
Niomee: Then I do this!

*Niomee dances halfway up the path. Surla walks and does a spontaneous pirouette when Niomee looks towards her. They are a few yards from the small line of trees (upstage left). Jacko walks to the bushes, presses his face into them and sees the leggy red head with the dark skin. Surla hears the bushes. She strokes her purse straps and turns to her sister. Her hand rises and reaches out to touch Niomee. She changes her mind; her hand floats in mid air and she brings it back to her body. She mumbles, sliding her hand back into her purse, fiddling with some keys. Surla wraps her hand around the keys, feeling for the ring holes. She puts her fingers through them and squeezes tight. The sisters pass the clique. Surla hears another shuffle, and leaves crunching under the soles of shoes. She touches Niomee and tugs her jacket.*

Surla: Streetlights are going down. We’re never going to make it like this. Focus; let’s move.

Jacko: Hey? Hey? (He breaks through the bush). Could you come here for a minute; we’re lost. We could use some help. Could you help?

*Surla holds a key between each finger. Niomee looks at them still stretching her legs out, but not talking anymore. The rest of the guys come around the sides of the bushes. Surla slides the keys and her wallet into her sweatshirt pouch.*

Chad: How do we get to town? We’re from Mack U.

Surla: Don’t answer! When I say run, run.

Niomee: You’re scaring me.

Jacko: We don’t know where we’re going.

Surla: 1, 2, 3…!

*Niomee takes off before she finishes, making a u-turn across the path, sliding a little in the muck. Surla turns and follows, looking back. She sees them coming fast. She clutches the keys and uses the other hand to make sure the keys are standing straight up between her fingers. She stops, turns, taking her right hand out and swings the keys. Jacko ducks and they hit Collin, slicing his cheek from cheekbone to temple. She pushes the third guy and then runs back towards Niomee.*

Collin: Really?

Jacko: Get her.

Chad: I am.
Jacko is ahead of Surla. She doesn’t get two yards and Chad jumps on her from behind, trying to pull her down with his weight. She still runs, leaning forward and low. Collin rams her legs out from under her and she falls. Chad’s fists slam down on the sides of her face, as she goes down. She loses her breath landing.

Surla: Get off! Help us.

Collin: Get off her.

It rains harder. Chad gets off. Collin drags Surla under the tree cover upstage. Chad jumps on top of her; she uses her arms to block the onslaught of fists, keys still in her hand. She bucks him off. She sees Niomee being dragged off into the park upstage.

Surla: No. Collin grabs her legs. She kicks and gets him in the face, blood spurts from his cut. She rises to one knee, but then she feels her shirt jerking sideways with so much force, she falls down again. Chad puts his knees on her shoulders, holding her to the ground. Collin comes over and starts booting her. She kicks Collin back, but then folds over and kicks Chad’s face. When he lets go, she stretches back out to protect her head from being kicked in by Chad. Collin’s booting her ribs still, Chad grabs hold of her head, by holding her chin. She swings her leg as hard as she can across her body, tripping Collin. Chad pulls hard on her chin. She holds his arms and swings her legs back over her head, kicking him in the face. He flies back.

Surla: Help us!

She goes to get up, but Collin grabs the back of her pants. Chad is up too. She uses his hold on her pants for leverage and uses all her weight to punch Chad in the balls. He doubles over. Collin jerks her down and flips her over and starts punching her in the head.

Surla: I will kill you! She punches back.

Collin: Hold her.

Chad: I can’t…

Collin: Sit on her

Chad: She won’t tell.

Collin: She will.

Surla: I won’t.

Collin holds her mouth and uses his other fist to punch her. She tries to move, she hits him with her arms but he ducks and weaves.
Surla: Niomee?

Orator: Her neck moves back and forth. She sees the sun, the mountains, back to sun. Nose is running. The rain’s coming. Burrs in her hair. She grabs at the air, tries to get them out, but they stay.

Burrs scrape at warmth. Cold drops through her belly seeping through skin and memory. Who are these men?

Surla: Am I making these low sounds? Skin moves back from flesh. I feel like a pig. Arms feel like skeletons, weightless. Punches feel like pillows on a child face…Hurting inside my skin. Heartbeats, “BOOM, BOOM!” getting louder. This can’t be me. I hear flesh squish, “boom, boom.”

Dark covers my eye.

Eye tears and turns into a pillow and his fist turns into a pillow, Pulling away; then back again, batting softly

Bounces like it’s made of air.

Liquid streams from my lashes, down my cheek. Pillow’s wet. What’s happening? I am not breathing. I shake, and tense, trying to move.

Muscles spasming for want of breath. Liquid rushes out of my nose, I breathe in; liquid and breath hit the back of my throat, running down the back of it. Tastes sweet. Air comes with more fluid. Breathe over liquid. Something’s wrong? My brain drools, my eyes roll. I look at his fists; blood everywhere. Blood drips onto my upper lip and into my mouth, streaming into my throat. A scream comes out a gurgle and tears drip out the sides of my eyes and into my ears, flowing down to my eardrums. A sharp pain runs from my ear to my jaw. I can’t hear. What’s happening outside? Just screaming…his hand becoming two hands then muffled heaves and quirks.

He lets go. My body shakes. I am sweating. I breathe hard. Chest spasms echo in my brain, thumping at its outer edges. I look up they both watch me, talking something, muffled sound. The drops are deafening…painful. I hear something tear? Sounded like it’s inside. Tongues warm, mouth filling with fluid. Where is this water coming from?

Am I dying?

I’m dying. Here?

He bends down over me, reaching into me.

Orator: Madness rolls over happiness, as he drives his hands into her flesh through fear, tearing courage out of her heart. He writhes and snakes
over her body. Plummeting struggles into caverns tasting of death. Turning will into demise, embedding her in his tomb. Her heart slows to eyes rolling back, spurting forth memories of childhoods with cousins, hockey and bouncing balls….men are not the same. (End).

Previous Poem with Movement

Chad leans his body on one of her arms and Collin uses his free arm to punch her in the face again. Collin gets off, walks past her head and stands there. She rattles her keys; hanging like bloody knives between her flesh-torn fingers. Burrs scrape at warmth. Cold drops through her belly seeping in through skin and memory. She turns and grabs his leg as he leaves it to walk to Chad. She waits till he starts falling, she plunges those keys into his calf. He moves forward quickly. The keys skim over his skin and catch on his heel and pierce his Achilles tendon. It snaps. Chad jumps on her punching her ribs and stomach and then her face. Collin uses his arm to cover her mouth. She flinches to the sun, as Chad keeps plummeting his fists into her. He moves his body up to her hips. She knees his back. Chad rolls off her. Who are these guys? Collin jumps on. He grabs her throat, her throat grinds and low sounds permeate from it. Am I making these low sounds? She feels her throat close and the sound stop. It opens and that same low sound comes out. He starts punching her. She tries to catch his hands. She can’t. He keeps punching that eye. Skin beneath her eye tears. (Surla’s Voice Over). Skin peels back from flesh. I feel like a pig. My arms feel like skeletons, a bird without wings, weightless. She can’t see. She tries to grab at her mouth. Chad holds her down harder. She stops and feels. The punches feel like pillows batting a child’s face. My heartbeats, “BOOM, BOOM,” getting louder and louder. Sound effects in time with this line and sounds like a heartbeat and Chad hits her in time with these heartbeat sounds. This can’t be me. I hear flesh squish “boom, boom.” She speaks in time with the blows and the voiced-over heartbeat sounds. Eye tears and turns into a pillow and his fist is a pillow batting softly, pulling back, then coming back again; bounces like it’s made of air. Liquid streams from my eyelashes, my nose. Pillow’s wet. I am not breathing. I shake, and tense, trying to move, my muscles spasming for want of breath. Liquid rushes out of my nose, I breathe in; liquid and breath hit the back of my throat, running down the back of it. Tastes sweet. Air comes with more fluid. Breathe over liquid. Something’s wrong? My brain drools, my eyes roll. I look at his fists; blood everywhere. Blood drips onto my upper lip and into my mouth, streaming into my throat. A scream comes out a gurgle and tears drip out the sides of my eyes and into my ears, flowing down to my eardrums. A sharp pain runs from my ear to my jaw. I can’t hear. What’s happening outside? Just screaming…his hand becoming two hands then muffled heaves and quirks.

Chad: You’re killing her.

He lets go. My body shakes. I am sweating. I breathe hard. Chest spasms echo in my brain, thumping at its outer edges. I look up they both watch me, talking something, muffled sound. The drops are deafening…painful. I hear something tear? Sounded like it’s inside. Tongues warm, mouth filling with fluid. Where is this water coming from? go of me. The drops are deafening…painful. She can hear something tear. It sounds like it’s inside. She grabs her head behind her ears where she feels the sound coming from, the ripping sound. Her mouth fills with water. Water, where is this water from?
Chad: It’s coming out her mouth.

Collin: Hold her, she’s still not out.

Chad: You’re killing her.

Collin: She’s tough.

Chad: She’s a girl.

Collin: Just shut up.

Am I dying? I’m dying. Here? He bends down over me, reaching into me…\textit{From her stomach she positions the keys inside her palm, she breathes deep, pressess both arms up, her left hand supporting her right hand, plunging the keys into his face. He rolls off, biting his lips, so he won’t scream. Collin crawls towards her, as she gets up. He grabs her leg and punches the side of her knee. She flounders. He grabs and pulls her down. She punches and kicks. He pries the keys from her, keeping his face turned away. He throws them. She tries to turn. He grabs her neck and pushes her to the ground. He leans over her; she tries to knee him. He plows his knees into her legs, as he leans on her. He presses his thumbs deeper into her throat.}

Orator: Madness rolls over happiness as he drives his hands through her flesh into her fear, tearing out her courage. He writhes and he snakes over her body. Plummerting effort into caverns tasting of death. Turning will into demise, embedding her in a tomb. Her heart slows to her eyes rolling back, spurting forth memories of childhood playing with cousins, hockey and bouncing balls. Men are not all the same. \textit{Her body goes limp and he lets go.}

Collin: Cover her with that pile of leaves there.

\textit{Streetlights go out, floodlights are dim. He rolls off her and holds himself.}

Chad: She get you?

Collin: Just move her.

\textit{Chad drags her behind the trees. They hear the other girl screaming faintly in the distance. They run to the sound, upstage. They Exit. Black Out.}

\textbf{Scene 3}
Setting:

(A soft light comes up on Surla in the same spot (upstage left). Same as first scene, except there is a couple mud puddles and dirt in a couple areas. The sound of the other three crashing through the bush fade out. Low floodlights from downstage, emulating natural moonlight and forest cover upstage, where Surla is. Surla wakes.)

(These first four lines play and are prerecorded.)

Surla: The lights go out soon.

Niomee: Government saves money. Would be nice to have candles here.

Surla: You always had a soft soul. Love you for that.

Niomee: The moon’s high; the clouds are soft. The moon is beautiful and it is you when it is full, smiling on the earth.

Surla: I am so weak
Ache to see you
On the ocean preening, swaying, curving through waves,
Amidst dark,
 Hovering above dentallium shells and whalebone.
Brooding over dreams
Cuddling and cajoling them inside your mind
To play with them inside your heart
You’re the dancer
Emotionally transparent
Capturing hearts
Holding bodies up
To land and sea
Human and swan, walking, swimming
Mysteries interwoven between layers of reality and imagination
Differences
Alive
Honest
Peace
Trumpeter swans honk warnings and I call for you to rise
From embers to earth’s surface, to fly, to float, to swim
An occasion for you to dance inside your life and mine
You live inside me and memories old live in you,
Sacred you.

Poem with Movement
I am so weak/I ache to see you/On the ocean preening and swaying, curving through waves/amidst dark/hovering above dentalliums and whalebone. *(A dancer appears behind her, in a subdued spotlight, stepping quick steps and slow arm movements. The dancer where’s a paddle shirt, paddles hang along the sleeve making sounds with each footstep and change of arms. The arm is in front of their face and then the other arm, while opposite arm is behind, arm and leg switching, repeats itself over and over. The clicking of the paddles hums through her mind. The dancer comes from upstage right and moves downstage right. The poem/song floats overtop the scene).*

Brooding over dreams
Cuddling and cajoling them inside your mind
To play with them inside your heart
You’re the dancer
Emotionally transparent
Capturing hearts
To land and sea
Human and swan, walking, swimming
Mysteries interwoven between layers of reality and imagination
Differences
Alive
Honest
Peace
(trumpeter swan’s heard in the distance)
Trumpeter swans honk warnings and I call for you to rise From embers to earth’s surface, to fly, to float, to swim
An occasion for you to dance inside your life and mine
You live inside me and memories centuries old live inside you,
Sacred you.

*(Dance ends. Fade to Black. Dancer exits downstage left).*

*Slowly Surla touches the earth, gets up and digs. She moves to another area near a tree, where dirt is soft, scraping it into her left hand, moves it to the wettest ground. Mixes it, and puts it on her eye. She lifts more dirt up to the surface and mixes it with more water, drops her keys and puts her cut-up hand into it, picking the keys back up. (Sound of very light rain).*

Surla: Dirt, Niomee. Ma never taught you this. She would’ve. *(Soft drum sounds). *(She rattles her keys to the sound, unconsciously). Dirt takes the old stuff out and cleans it; it’ll be a little blurry but I will see in the end. It just takes a little while.

So wait. Wait. *(The mud starts to dry and cake on her eye. She looks around with her good one, the right one.)*

Orator: Dance unmasks
Searches for honesty
Unleashing, uncovering, discovering what lies beneath

*A drum beats. She gets up and dances, the end of the swan dance. She remembers movements*
that make her feel peaceful and focused. She touches her face.

Surla: I will dance, be born anew in the longhouse. Start again the journey to myself. Inside I know you are there, living, breathing being you. Stand up, sister, stay standing-up. *(She sits on the ground).* Still wet. *(Wind picks up and she notices a rag hanging on a branch. She unhooks it and examines it. It’s faded black with red-flecked paint. The material is rough and the paint is hard. She smells it.)* Dirt and rubber? Nylons, they’re Niomee’s. She must have fell. *(She hears branches snapping. She goes toward the sounds. She runs off upstage right.)* *(FADE TO BLACK).* Niomee.

**Scene 4**

**Setting**

*(No set. Longhouse ambiance/lighting. Fire dancer in the middle of the stage. Surla enters upstage right. Surla does a dance a 1/2 mile of running. Pre-recorded voice of Surla.)*

Surla: Squeezing light into this dark mass, I run on paper, Trying not to slip through a hole That funnels into nothingness I watch you and see the very essence of you dissolved The breath of you escaping into the cosmos, So when I walk amongst stars I fear of falling through into a black void of my mind.

I want to run Free myself of you Letting my skin breathe In the comfort of my own wounds Opening to scream To let the pain of believing the masks Seeing the man beneath the dance Scraping hatred into surfaces of skin and clawing deep into hearts Letting gold stars fall from her breast Expunging a woman’s touch and tenacity With her walk in the park In her love of motion and nature Grace in the sway of her skirt, the bounce of her hair The wonderings of her eyes Full of landscape Mirroring forest canopies and light blue skies
Peace
Even in the cold or wet
Glowing in sun or moon

She fits into this setting
And that escapes you
Burdens an ill-fitting life
So you take hers
Feeling like it will empty you of demise
It won’t, you will walk away empty
Dried out skeleton,
Speaking from skin
Jaws clacking
Fingers rattling
No flesh holding up your face
Words hang off sagging lips
Ears hollow and echoing your mind’s play

Scene 5

Setting:
(The stage has no set, except for one tree/dancer stage left mid stage. There is a low sound of running water and low yellow lights fade in simulating a moonlit forest. There’s a gray hue to the light. Negative atmosphere…It’s dusk, hard to see. Niomee, runs onto the stage, from upstage right, struggling through brush. Jacko jumps on her; she falls, writhing and kicking. He tries grabbing her hair and she gets up running.)

Niomee: No. Get away.


Niomee: I was just walking to the city. I can walk to the city. I want to walk to the city.

(Jacko grabs Niomee by the hair and pulls her down to the ground, mid-stage)

Niomee: Why Surla? Why does he chase me? Why does he hurt me?
What have I done? Still a child, barely a woman. Why?
What have I done wrong to deserve catastrophe, its skin scraping howls
Fighting to bring down the moon?)
Is it me who never listened?
Who never gave the world a chance to explain?
Letting this fire burn inside me, besides on the dance floor in my own mind?
Ma, I never appreciated how much of a woman you were
Are
Now, I am here, alone.
Femininity breathing life into me, yet seeping out as I speak.
Yearning for me to express, to cry, to beg, to turn and ask this man, why?
Did he look for me, find me and now he punishes me for being ‘a woman’?
This image of grace and stillness, of beauty and forever-living
Taking his violence, gracefully living past it, to serve him
This is insane
Is he insane?
Am I insane?
I feel like it
Running and beating, beating someone who only hurts me.
Killing my body’s flailing fury to survive
I could die
I want…
I want to see my sister
I never knew this is how it was, ma
Is this what womanhood is?
I don’t want it

Poem with Movement and dialogue
(Recorded)

Why Surla? Why does he chase me? Why does he hurt me? What have I done? Still a child, barely
a woman. (A swan dancer dressed in black comes out from upstage right and follows her,
mimicking her fighting him.) What have I done wrong to deserve catastrophe, its skin scraping
howls/Fighting to bring down the moon? /Is it me who never listened?/Who never gave the world
a chance to explain?/Letting this fire burn inside me, besides on the dance floor in my own mind?
Ma, I have never appreciated how much of a woman you were/Are/Now, I am here, alone.

Niomee: Take me home, out of this forest. I want home.

(She tries to run a semi circle to go back where she came from. Jacko short cuts to intercept
Niomee, the swan blocks him/the dancer transforms into Tsleil-Waututh dance.) Femininity
breathing life into me, yet seeping out as I speak. Yearning for me to express, to cry, to beg, to turn/And ask this man, why? (Jacko doesn’t listen and jumps over and then around the dancer.
The swan dancer leaps madly beside him. It’s like Niomee senses the vacuum and runs faster,
ripping and clawing at the branches around her, but the bushes are thick. He grabs her hair
and pulls her backwards to the ground.) Yearning for me to express, to cry, to beg, to turn and
ask this man why/Did he look for me, find me and now he punishes me for being ‘a woman’?/This
image of grace and stillness, of beauty and forever-living/Taking his violence, gracefully living
past it, to serve him. *(She goes down punching and elbowing, but he’s ready for it. He covers her mouth and rips apart her tights.)* Is he insane?/Am I insane?/I feel like giving up/ Running and beating, beating someone who only hurts me/Killing my body’s flailing fury to survive/I could die/I want/I want to see my sister again…/I never knew this is how it was, ma/Is this what womanhood is?/I don’t want it/ *(The swan dancer hits him. The two men hear him groaning and her muffled screams, then see her and Chad and Collin stop just upstage right.)*

Niomee: I am done.  
I have struggled and forced myself into place  
I could die here  
He will die before me  
Somehow  
I can barely move

*(Spotlight comes up, mid-stage right and all other lights dim)*

Jacko: That’s all I want. *(He hovers over her. She knees him; she gets away. He catches her. Dancer/swan hits Jacko and bites him.)* *(Fade to Black on Jacko and Niomee)*

Niomee: *(Surla enters stage down stage right, spotlight following her. Dancer exits stage left.)*

Surla: You there. *(Chad and Collin enter upstage left. She ducks moving towards left stage).* I remember this game, I want to play with you. *(She reaches down and rips her pant leg, picks up some stones and puts them in her pockets.)* I have the night, ma told me. It’s mine to hide, she said. Cup the stone and fling it at the target. It’s all in the legs. Breathe, relax and swing. *(She squats out of the moonlight and throws two stones. Collin hides. The first one hits Jacko in side of the head, the others miss.)*

Niomee: Surla. *(Jacko punches her.)*

Surla: I’m here. Don’t worry; I am not leaving you.

*(Surla keeps slinging.)* *(A projection of a swan is casted onto the stage left wall, behind Surla. (Collin enters from behind a tree, downstage left. *(Collin grabs her and punches her, she flies deep into shadow, mid-stage left. Chad enters the same way)*

Collin: Go and drag her out. We’ll finish her.

Chad: We did that. Doesn’t work. *(Surla crawls along the stage left wall).* She is older, and strong. She knows what we are doing. Old people were killed or died and young were taken. Illness and hunger spread. Some were hidden. She is one of them, keeping knowledge westerners don’t know. She runs like we did back then, so fast, no one hears - like she flies. We can’t catch her.
Collin: We kill her?

Chad: No. Leave her. She won’t tell. She’s scared of what we’ll do.

Collin: No, she’s not.

Chad: For her she is.

(They look around for her but she’s nowhere to be found. They go to Jacko.) (Spotlight follows the two men and a light goes up on Jacko).

Collin: Okay, I don’t want to be killed. We need to make knives or weapons.

Chad: For defense.

Collin: If she comes for me, I will kill or try to kill her. Use what’s here. She’s using stones. Here’s some wood. Sharpen the edges.

Jacko: My eye is excruciating. I can’t see. She broke my skull. She broke it.

Collin: It’s just swollen. We need to get out of here. She’ll be back.

Chad: Must be her sister.

Collin: Doubt it.

Jacko: Why me? The gauntlet sisters. She should have left; you beat her bad. She looked horrible, all cut up and stuff. How can she function like that and on no sleep and no water?

Collin: She’s getting water from somewhere.


Collin: Shut your blabbering, You’re losing it. Concentrate on healing, so wasteful.

Chad: He needs water.

Collin: Stay close. Water, later. Let’s make these things, then go. We’ll get her, immobilizing her by hitting her legs. If we miss, we may never get another chance.

Chad: She will kill us.

Collin: She alive? (points at Niomee).
Chad: Idiot. *(Talking to Jacko).*

Jacko: Don’t leave me.

Collin: Get going. She’s coming.

Chad: Okay, this way.

*(Exit stage right. Fade to Black)*

*(Lights low on Surla, downstage right, on the ground. She’s picking up stones, while watching the two men looking for her)*

Surla: Why do they keep coming after me?

Orator: He finds her with his breath, melts into her mind an inescapable loss. An imprint lies on her aged heart as her mind spirals into nothing.

Surla: Engaging my heart in its rage  
Blasting circles of challenge and propensity  
Dive into this scopes of contestants and fury  
Live, this soul  
An instrument of retribution  
No smoke furls from this fire. Nothing touches me. The weight of my own mind carries memories of death and hate. Life is so precarious. It stands on the edge of madness and I stand beneath it, trying to rise, torn and flailing. The world is unfamiliar. My wings break; down mats from filth. I haven’t washed and am immersed in wrath, feeling death’s claw, wrapping around my neck as I watch her dwindle, a child remembering to fly. Body dissolving into the unknown.

Score it all with Tsleil-Waututh notes, instead  
Sing  
Such beauty hangs on breath  
Deep inside  
Find it hidden  
Moving flight into dance  
Outside in open space  
Not hidden  
Not afraid  
I am unafraid  
Courage, an unconscious occurrence  
Speaking over the conscious effort to rationalize and run.
(Chad and Collin enter stage left. Surla exits downstage right. Chad and Collin exit downstage right.) (Black Out).

Scene 6

Setting:

(Nothing. Dancer enters. Surla sits on mid-stage right, sitting in shadow, only parts of her face showing through her wet hair, facing downstage)

Surla: Fear creeps in on padded feet. *(Surla speaking from the wings downstage right.)*

Niomee: *(in the distance upstage)*. No.

Surla: Need to grab hold. *(Rains harder. Light Fades to Black).*

*(Swan dancer comes in dancing madly, then calm)*

Empty body of fear  
Fill it with beauty  
Reaching to sky  
To fly  
To find her  
Bring her to the clouds  
Protect her from this cold  
Empower her fiction  
Move beyond boundaries  
Of limits and today  
It’s violence and mindsets  
Bringing fiction to life  
And life to fiction  
No lines exist  
No time persists,  
There’s just now  
I will find her  
I need to go back

Scene 7

Setting:

(No set)

Niomee: No.

Jacko: You wanted this, for a long time. Stay down…You look through me.
Don’t look at me. I said, don’t look at me. Stop moving; just lie still. Get down. Ride it.

(Jacko’s raping Niomee and Surla enters downstage right. She’s holds a sack of stones. She sneaks up behind Jacko and slams a rock down on his head. Collin and Chad enter upstage left, sound effects of the stones flying and landing). (Collin exits stage left. A projection of a giant swan on stage, behind Surla, downstage left. Collin comes runs/enters stage left. Collin stabs her as she moves. Surla exits stage left. Chad holds Niomee.)

Jacko: Where’s the girl?

Chad: Are you stupid? Your going to get us killed. Every one on this side of the mountain could hear you.

Jacko: Where is she? We can’t let her go. We can’t. She’ll tell. She’s evil. You can’t let Her.

Collin: Hold his mouth. Do it.

Chad: He’ll bite.

Collin: Use your coat. If I do it, I’ll put my foot in it and it won’t come out.

Jacko: Don’t.

(Surla’s upstage left now. Jacko starts gagging).

Chad: Captain, breathe through your nose. Don’t sit up. Breathe. Spit it out then. He can’t breathe. (Giving him the Heimlik maneuver.) Breathe. Man, can’t you get her? She’s so close. Slow down. Don’t stand, stupid. He’s not listening.

Collin: Leave him. Go that way. (Another stone goes by Chad and Jacko).

Chad: I can’t. He’ll die. Look at him. Look at her; she’ll kill him. Hey lady, we’re just a college kids, football players from some corner-hole-in-the-wall team. Let us out. I won’t tell. Let’s just get out of here. We have to get out.

(Nioomee’s crawling towards upstage right. Surla enters downstage left. Collin crawls to Chad and grabs him. Chad grabs Jacko’s hair. They exit upstage centre.)

Surla: (The bloody stick is in Surla’s ponytail. Her legs is wrapped in cloth) Wakeup. It’s me, Niomee. It’s Surla. Wakeup. I came. I know. I know you’re tired. Please, stand. They’re coming.

Niomee: Joe?
Surla: Pa? We’ll make it without him. We can, we always do. We’ve made it this far. We’ll survivor and heal. You will survivor. You will.

*(She places all the pieces to Niomée’s skirt and tights together like a wrap, in a mound on top of her belly.)*

Surla: We’ll go to the ocean for the others. They’ll help. Remember last year? They will watch and be mesmerized. It’s not far. We’ll make it. You can get up whenever you want to. I learned that from you, mind over matter. Stamina, you called it. “Keep practicing”… Master dancer. Ocean’s this way. Niomée? *(Both Exit Stage Left and Black Out.)*

**Scene 8**

**Setting:**

*(No set. Spotlight on a man and a woman dancer centre stage.)*

*(He grabs the dancer rips off her costume, underneath is blood. She falls. A projection of a swan rises from her body) (BLACK OUT).*

**Scene 9**

**Setting:**

*(Lake scene/ripping water projected onto stage right wall. There’s a tree up stage right. Surla and Niomée Enter upstage right. Surla drags Niomée to the tree and gets water in her hands.)*

Surla: Thought you were gone. Couldn’t face it though, so I kept trying. Here’s some water, in my hands, right here. We’re at Osprey Lake, The ocean is soon. Drink. You need to. Don’t move; it’s bleeding again. Just be still. You are so beautiful Niomée.

Niomée: Surla, I never listened to you. I never listen.

Surla: Don’t do that. You’re a kid. This was not supposed to happen. You weren’t supposed to be there. You not supposed to be here. This is not our doing. We didn’t drag us in here.

Niomée: Listen; I don’t care what they do to me anymore, just get me out. I want out of here.

Surla: I will, just hold on, believe and listen.

Niomée: What’s wrong with my face?
Surla: It’s your eyes mostly. They’re puffy.
Niomee: I forgot to open my eyes all this time? They hurt and then I just stopped trying. It was just easier not to see. He was ugly, so ugly. Surla, he hurt me. I’m afraid.
Surla: They’re going to come back, that one guy will for sure. I have to plan a strategy to protect us, or at least get us away.
Niomee: Why, Surla? Why did they do this to me? What did I do? I’m scared; I am so scared all the time now.
Niomee: They are the monsters. You did nothing. You are gold. Nothing deserves what they did, nothing. I have to go get stones, in case they come. Just sit to stop the bleeding. When they come I will have my sling but first, I will lie in the shadows over there and when they get close, I’ll bludgeon them. Then they will stop. I might have to run after them, but don’t be scared. I will be back. Look how far I have come. (Surla places 5 big stones randomly on the stage.)

(Collin enters stage right.)

Collin: Having fun yet?
Surla: Why won’t you die? You will.
Collin: (He circles her. She circles back until she’s close to a stone. A rock slams Collin across the side of his face. He falls; Niomee stands behind him, holding a stone.)

Surla: Niomee. It’s bleeding. Niomee?

(Chad enters stage right.)

Chad: You’re a dead girl.
Surla: Nope. I will kill you, then that other guy and this one will be the last. Try.
Chad: Okay.
Surla: (She pulls the sharp stick out her hair. He swings his stick at her. She strikes and he catches her hand with a looped twine in his other hand. He yanks her and her body is being dragged to him. She gasps in pain. She lies down reaches for a stone. It stops the stick from penetrating her neck. Both his hands are on her neck now and he is jerking her. She stabs him in the chest and stomach. He lets go, tries to grab her hand, can’t, so he jumps off. She crawls backwards; he catches the pant leg and crawls up her. She accidently stabs the ground; he grabs her hand and stabs it. She hits him with one of the five stones with her left hand. He lets go. She grabs the stick and pulls it out of her hand.)

(Chad exits downstage left. Collin wakes.)

Surla: I am a woman beautiful as a swan. (She can barely hold her head up; she pushes herself away from the tree.)
Collin: You are nothing but dead.

*(She dives into the water/lake. This part of the scene is done in dance, mixing reality and abstract performance. She swims and sinks, two water dancers enter stage right and lift her to the top and then dance her under the surface, drowning her, under water she comes alive and dances. Collin can’t see her. Collin looks behind the tree, Niomee is not there.)*

Collin: Chad. She’s dead. She’s dead.

*(Collin exits stage left. Niomee enters from upstage right.) (Three water dancers appear, painted like water.) (Atop the water a lone swan video projection). *(The dancers come out of the water-projected scene and lay down the platform. Niomee crawls to the water and drinks. The dancers pick her up and lay her on the platform and pick it up, raising it over their heads into the water scene. The swan projection disappears as Niomee rises.)*

Niomee: Sweet wings lie on my face, soft and undulating on skin, warm….power of wings beating inside my heart, flying past anger, running outside this vicious storm.

*(The light on Niomee narrows to a tight funnel under her, so just her face and parts of her body show, while she dance the beginning minute of the Swan Dance. They carry her back to the tree.) (Black Out). *(Spotlight on Orator, downstage left)*

Orator: West coast woman lying curled in a landscape meant for far better men. Unwind this spell of land-filled treason against women and fill it with our light, glowing from the feathers of a white swan, blossoming every day, movement and grace, fragility and calm, floating atop her wet world.

**Scene 10**

**Setting:**

*(There’s a projection of trees upstage and bushes stage right and centre stage and a bit of water/lake on the downstage right wall. Moonlight is the natural light coming from downstage. Surla’s body is downstage right. She wakes. Collin enters downstage left.) *(Surla crawls closer towards Collin. Chad’s head rises from the centre bushes. She hits Chad with a stone.)*

Chad: AH!

*(Spotlights rise on the Surla, Chad and Collin)*

*(She hides.)*

Collin: This is her playing field, her cavern. This girl of shadows and mysteries takes the dead of night to draw fictions; it is this world that she makes her play field for all
performances she dreams to give. She uses us as practice. She knew this tree …this stone. We are stumbling fools. She dances without a sound on dry tree branches and leaves. Not a whisper.

Chad: We’re going to lose. I’ll lose everything my scholarship, my girlfriend, my mother…I am a culprit, guilty. Rape, ‘rape’ we did it. She’ll disown me, my mother. I don’t want to lose her.

Collin: Not a whisper, college boy.
Chad: We can’t escape. It doesn’t matter anymore.
Collin: I hear something.

(Both duck into bushes centre stage). Surla’s head rises out of the bushes stage right. A dancer enters upstage right. Broken streams of light on dancer. Surla looks across to the two men, but then sees dancer’s hair and bits of clothing (Paddle shirt) in streams of light going through branches.)

Chad: I heard her.
Collin: I hear something else.
Surla: I am torn between the world I live in and the next. I have split myself into two sets of arms, and measured myself according to one set of rules, nurturing shadows of men. I have milked myself dry of despair and driven myself to rain. Soaked my sorrow in ambivalence. Returned here to mourn. I am free to change from day to day, to camouflage death and pain in cloaks of red and silk. Yet then, I am weighted by guilt for dishonesty and dreams disappear and loss saturates my mind. Chaos and destruction clutter the shelves of my memory, poisoning me.

(Surla places the stones in her pockets, loads her slings and starts firing.)

Surla: You left her here broken, but alive
You don’t even know she danced in storms, under tents, on the beach, in homes for the dead and newly born.
You didn’t know she learned to dance amidst fathers and mothers and for children, who never dared.
She was going to learn longhouse in winters beneath the moon, under deep night.
You could have made it safe. You could have stopped and now look.
If it wasn’t so dark, I would slay you.

(Chad ebbs towards her. Collin exists stage right. Surla rests/hides behind a tree. Off stage left Jacko, Niomee and Collin can be heard, blasting through the bush.)
Collin: Get her.
Jacko: I am dying, linesmen.

Surla: They are gathering her bones in their arms. Shadows amidst shadows. Smoke rises. Death permeates. Not yet. (dancers enter camouflaged as trees). (Surla stretches out her arms and starts doing slow arm movements from the middle of the Swan Dance). She is on an ocean, running, lifting and rising into the sky. Letting her mind free, soaking her mind in playful thoughts. He diminishes her. Soaks her in his wrath, putrid smell of him everywhere. No music plays. Life entombed playful stories in her mind to hide her from the cold, of living amongst men allowed to breed even though they remain heartless.

Score them with Tsleil-Waututh notes
Sing
Beautiful
No right or wrong
Such beauty hangs on this breath
In this song
Moving flight into dance
Madness burns to nothing
In the fire pit at the centre of the long-house, while people dance.

(Black Out on Surla. Spotlight on Niomee barely standing, stage left)

Orator: The wind blows off a crooked branch and her face gleams in the moonlight, a smile of wonder and glory in this vast array of madness and fury, earth plush all around her, embracing her. Nature, quiet and subdued, dark and harmonious with mist and rain. The night speaks to woman glorious and whimsical, meeting torment; arms open for the hours of fighting.

(Fade to Black)

Scene 11

Setting:

(Video projection of water/lake on stage right a tree stage right.)

Surla: We’re going to the ocean. I’ll perform, so people will be there waiting and we will be safe. Just a little more, a little more time. I know it hurts.
Niomee: Am I dead? I remember gusts of rage, swirling winds, plummeting into sorrow and shame/Broke, I broke/Can’t feel it; can’t fly/Can’t feel what you are saying/Can’t feel my pain.

Orator: Consciousness breaks through the gauze of mortality. Body breathes in pain so excruciating, so everlasting. Still in their faces, a persistence A memory of home There is beauty amongst the wreckage.

Surla: Remember we ran in the forest with my ma and dad? It’s different forest, this one. It vacuums my lungs of air and desire for breath. Yet you are here and we breathe together, the air circles us and I want that to continue. I want you beside me, always.

(Surla and Niomee walk upstage. Black Out. Spotlight up on Orator. Surla and Niomee enter downstage right and exit upstage right.)

Orator: From depths of an ocean once familiar and clean, is a story once hers and now yours. Movement ripples to nothingness, Where birds once sang, Where whale sounds burst She knew nothing of rape, Here she is amidst her own Trying to live.

Scene 12

Setting:

(Video projection on upstage wall. On the upper half of the stage is another stage and a fire pit, unlit lanterns circle the stage and five chairs sit in a semi circle downstage. A man sits in the audience. Blankets sit in front of the chairs. Quiet ocean sounds.)

(Surla and Niomee enter downstage right.)

Niomee: Why did you leave me there?
Surla: I didn’t. I did, but I was trying to get to you.
Niomee: Do you know what he did to me?
Surla: I killed him. Listen.
(Surla helps Niomee sit down and another audience member. Spotlight rises on two men stage left, holding log drums. A spotlight rises in downstage left on the Orator. Surla enters the stage from the wings.)

Orator: It is this flow of water down the sides of my body that heals, 
Soaking in whispers of doubt, 
Cutting through fatalism bestowed on the cast away 
In the ocean a bird swims, 
Winds pick at sunbeams between clouds 
Sunbeams pluck gray from her eyes 
She is delicate; her eyes look far away

Yet they touch everything. 
Oceans and horizons 
My story defines me. I am worthy and trustworthy. 
I am tenacious and determined. 
I need to remember to capture this swan in my mind and let her rest in my heart 
To see her wings, flowing and gentle 
It is you in this perfection, drawing me in closer to myself. 
Your flight is within me 
Your fight is in me, 
Trying to rise above my own situation 
In this case demise, 
To survive this one day 
Whether it is to kill or maim or simply destroy all those around me 
So I can dance and dance with you.

Yet it is this flow of water down the sides of my body that heals, 
Soaking in whispers of doubt.

(Lanterns light. Niomee dancing, drummers drum. She dances the Swan Dance)

Orator: In the ocean a bird swims, 
Winds pick at sunbeams between clouds 
Sunbeams pluck gray from her eyes 
She is delicate; her eyes look away 
Yet they touch everything 
Soaring over oceans and horizons.

Surla: My story defines me. I am worthy and trustworthy. 
I am tenacious and determined. 
Yet I need to feel comforted and believed for my dream and none other. 
I need to remember to capture this swan in my mind and let her rest inside my heart 
Seeing her wings flowing and gentle 
It is you in this perfection, drawing me in closer to myself
Your flight within me
Your fight in me,
Trying to rise above your own situation
To survive a day
I will do whatever it takes
Whether it is to kill, maim or simply destroy all those around me
So I can dance and dance with you.

Orator: She swims, skin atop damaged bone
Drifting on an ocean made of tears
Shrinking distance between dream and reality
Between her beauty and the violence
She grasps belief, harvesting it in a cedar skirts,
Brushing winter in warm sweeps
Burning memories into minds
Melting hardness
Transforming landscapes
Removing burdens
Heaving empowerment onto bodies
Lifting confidence to shoulders
A victory from reality
Dreams become story
Her story becomes a dream
Struggle becomes stories
Stories become history making.
She stretches emotion into body
To a sound
Everyone can hear
Revealing an image
One day everyone will see.

Niomee: I can create life from a life I dream of or I can re-dream.
I am the pinnacle of creation,
The sustenance of my own desires
I can fly with or without wings
Beauty lies here in my transformation
From human
No longer an instrument of retribution
No longer meeting violence
Inside I am a swan
Natural
Untouched by you
Untorn
Innocent again.
Niomee: I have whirled around you; risen like a puff of smoke, thin and sensual, 
    Embracing flight, curving upwards into dreams, 
    Whispering sweet sound 
    Yet you still did not see me 
    Rising 
    Standing amidst rain and trees 
    You watch 
    I soar.