

On the Inside

after Back Inside Herself by S. Pearl Sharp

Scene 1 - Preamble in the entryway

You always do this. / Do what? /
Complicate what's simple. / No, I don't. / Yes,
you do. Now pick yourself up. / It just can't be
this simple. / Listen, if you keep at that pointless
question you'll wring every ounce of courage
from your hands. You hear me? You'll worry
away the corners of your own lips. Upturned,
downturned, they'll become the same thing,
you'll be unrecognisable and then it will be too
late for even the inside to cure. / You're
catastrophising. / Let's just get going.

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So, what's the question? / What? / You said
something just now about, a 'pointless question'.
/ Yeah. / I haven't been able to capture it in that
way. It just feels like I'm beneath the ruins of
something. / Oh. Relation, maybe? / Yeah,
maybe. But not even trapped. Mostly just afraid
that what waits above will not remedy anything
at all. / I'm sorry. / Yeah. / Well, you should have
said. It's important to name these things, and of
course it's a question. Something like *Can I Still
Fit?* / Too closed. / *How Will The Fit Feel?* /
Closer. / *Will it have a pain of its own?* / Ah.
That's it. Thank you. / No problem. And trust
me, after a few days inside, you won't care about
the answer, I'm sure. Once the mapping is done
all you'll want to do is explore. Pain or not.

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Mapping? / Yeah, you know, the physical kind.
No point going back inside if you don't know
the terrain. / You have to navigate? / Of course,
so you do this internal mapping. Remember, you

were into it for a while? Self-positioning. Remember? Long name. / Proprioception? / That's the one! Bodily recognition if I remember correctly. Legs, torso, arms, etc. You said we need it to know how to move between sitting and standing and running and leaping and sprinting and slowing and lying and stilling. / It's actually not 'recognition', but yes. / What? / It's not recognition, technically. Not cognition, nothing to do with the mind at all. It's a sense that the body (or being) has on its own. Some plants have it too. Isn't that something? You know, all senses are a certain kind of response to a certain kind of stimuli so I wonder what exactly is being responded to in this case. / What did I just say about simple and complicated? / I'm not trying to be- / No no, I'm talking about the body and its mapping, and you think we need to go into gravity and its causes. / Okay, that's not what I was saying. But actually, yeah I do think that! Well, gravity definitely, pointless to ask of its causes. / Exactly! Especially where we're going. Equally pointless to ask: *why does the day feel different here? Picking up a glass, tying up your hair, lifting your tailbone into downward dog?* / Okay, you've made your point. / This is a return, this is how it is, you're supposed to feel it. That's all.

Scene 2 - Going once! Going twice!

I won't need devotion, will I? / Not while you're there, no. / The whole ordeal became so quotidian, didn't it. / At best! Grotesque at worst. / Adornment too. It just doesn't suit me, been a long time since it did. / Never did me any good, just: eyes eyes eyes, mouth mouth mouth, touch touch touch! Couldn't think fast enough to decide if I wanted any of it.

I might actually toss this hard cover too you know. What am I going to do with a face here? / You're right actually, I might do the same. Looks less and less like me anyway. / Looking at it like this - it was never a striking face, not a knockout, but it was stubborn, wilful, a loyal thing. / Always made sure to linger in the minds you wanted it to! / Oh yes, materialising above them in the 2am dark as they struggled against their own devotion.

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The dance of it! That was the real thing "*I'll be an apparition to you, if you will to me.*" / I once knew someone who enjoyed promising more, too much. / Oh? / Way too much. Lists of promises and they'd always end with, "*and then I'll lick the sky clean! Swallow up every cloud. Blue, for you!*" / Gosh. / Yeah. It was selfish. I kept waiting for them to grow out of it. But then I met someone, a good friend, a Taurus. Taught me that twice was a pattern of behaviour. / Well, we're a long way from all that now. / Yeah. Will be for a while.

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I'm tossing the wrap dress too I think. / The one that's 20% dress, 80% faith. / The one and only! Passed down generation to generation. / Famously easy to unfasten, or infamously I should say. / But always meticulously laced, never a tangle. Clean in its pulling apart. / You take a lot of pride in that / I did. It's harder than it looks, you know, to be pulled apart like that and only by the ones you want. Takes training. / I'm sure. So now? Without it? / Plan is to spend some time away from all of that, covering and uncovering, and make the body totally unknown. Un-own the body. / That won't take

that long. / Yeah, not sure what I'll do with the rest of the time. / Best not to think about it, let time make the most of you.

Scene 3 - Opacity, my old friend.

The ground's liquefaction wrong foots me. I stumble, sink straight into it. Feel pretty limbless for a while, a new fish without a current to guide me. To learn me my forwards and backwards, my up my down. Sudden encapsulation, it feels cruel, like an unfreedom. Oh, how alien rest had become.

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After a while, I heard a voice call out, "Onward!" Unable to discern 'from where' and 'to where' I was being called, I just stood there, pitiful, and eventually, as is my nature, made work of what was not work. Measuring the sound's properties, exploring etymologies and translations of the word which called itself out again and again, "Onward!" I exhausted myself from a futile task, felt so hateful of that familiar feeling.

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Something approached. From where I couldn't tell you. A perspective trick, getting smaller and smaller the closer it came. An announcement, quietening as it arrived. Slight and steady. It said: *Wisen up. "Onward!" is nothing like forwards or backwards or further or closer. If I called out "onward" and you heard "left or right?", well there would be something seriously wrong with you wouldn't there? No direction. Closest comparison? Maybe "deeper and deeper still." but even that is powerfully wrong. This is a call towards undisciplining I suppose. You don't walk into a feeling, a feeling walks into the dark room of you. Does it's thing and then passes through. What was*

that? Yeah, could be a person too. The most touched part of the house is the door, its handle. You're made up of the people who call out "Onward!" towards you, and you them.

Postscript

Contrary to popular belief, this isn't one of those stories where, if she just stops looking, she'll find it. Inside is not a hidden revelation, secreted away from you, waiting for you to give up on it, to doubt, so it can swoop in and prove itself, unfindable and therefore Almighty. No. It takes determination, clear eyes. You've actually got to pack yourself up, pop yourself just outside the door of you. You'll be glad to know I've left the artist's studio entirely. The work can finally get on with it's own making. I took a long walk that afternoon, looked out from over an underpass, the cars at the right speed for themselves, me at the right speed for mine.