

somewhere. Never know when an occasion might call for something festive and pure-fun.”

“Play shoes, work shoes, dress-up shoes--you’ve covered more styles than any other customer, I think.”

“Everything in its season.” The elderly customer paused a moment in private reflection. “Well, today it’s just something restful and comfortable. I don’t do too much traveling anymore but still need something for my volunteer hours at the local library.”

“I believe we have just the thing, right over here.”

Then there was the time a peculiar man with extremely large feet came into the store. The eager apprentice approached, guided the customer to a nearby chair, and attempted to measure the man’s feet to determine the appropriate size. Unfortunately the measuring device wouldn’t expand far enough to take an accurate measurement.

“I’m sure we must have something here that will fit,” the young man assured the customer, eager to make a sale. Yet after trying several dozen of the largest sizes of shoes in the store, not a single shoe could be found.

“Why not just try this pair?” the salesman prompted, “I think they’ll loosen up after you’ve worn them for while, after they’ve been broken-in, as they say.”

“They do hurt my feet,” the customer pondered, “but my old shoes are so worn they’re falling apart and the store where I bought them went out of business years ago. Isn’t there any way for me to still find shoes that fit? What do you do with customers who just can’t wear what is typical for everyone else?” The apprentice looked to the more experienced salesperson but received only a blank expression in response, as the older salesperson tried to think of what to say.

These questions are, unfortunately, still seeking an answer. What answer shall we give them?

My most sincere apologies for the tardiness of this issue. Yes, there will still be a December newsletter also, even though the November issue was mailed so very late in the month. So many things have been shouting for attention during the last few weeks, but it is my intention to nevertheless be faithful to all of my responsibilities. Hope you all have (had?) a very happy Thanksgiving and a joyous holiday season. ---S.W.

Subscription Information:

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Sister Who’s Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant “information overload,” news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding. Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed. Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified. Blessings, love, and peace to you.
---Sister Who

Autumn Leaves

Individual pieces of our tree, perhaps unnoticed and even taken for granted, suddenly turning new and striking colors, calling for attention one last time before they begin their whirling dance back to mother earth. There is the temptation not to notice, to look with eager anticipation beyond the present moment to the beautiful and festive holiday season just around the corner. Also there is the temptation to long for the prolonging of warm summer days when jackets and sweaters were quite unnecessary.

Yet we find ourselves in the present, perhaps uncomfortable, season of change. Here too, there are divine gifts of insight and opportunities for personal growth if we will only refrain from dismissing them before we have heard and seen all they have to share. The future will come soon enough, but what is present will become past and we will never be able to touch it again. We need to remember it, for it is part of our peripheral vision of the larger picture of life, but we will never be able to look again with the freshness of the present moment of discovery.

Why should I be in such a hurry to rake the leaves into a pile, stuff them into a bag, and have them hauled away to some unseen place of reconstitution into the earth beneath my feet? Why do I sometimes find them to be distracting interruptions of the supposedly more important work upon which I focus?

Quite possibly, my own uniqueness has been exactly that for others: a distracting interruption which also bears a divine gift of insight and an opportunity for

personal growth. Perhaps this is why I need to take at least a moment to hold in my hands and gaze upon with my own eyes, the myriad of colors and shapes to be found in autumn leaves.

Yet there is also the gentle but disturbing threat, the reminder that I will someday be the dry leaf in someone else’s hands, the moisture of my essence born away by the wind to places unknown, where I will join in the rebirth of a yet-unknown spring, when winter has finally passed.

Has it already been two months since the terrible and shocking day of tragedy? Are we any better at accepting its historical reality than we were during those first few moments after the crashes, when the buildings were still burning? More importantly, are we settling back into the same old ruts of behavior and thought or have we moved on to better ways to be and live? I look at my reflection in the mirror every day, shaving and brushing my teeth, but it is not often that I dare to really look at my own eyes, to see whether any of the truth of my soul is evident there, as so many say it is.

What I do quite often, usually each and every day, is to be mindful of the effect of each action and thought upon that soul, to remember that with every word I say and every thought I think I am further shaping the deepest reality of who I am.

When my autumn finally comes, the life and soul I have wrought will become fully evident, just as all trees are green in summer but return to more individual hues when summer has passed, some veering toward red and

gold while others shift to dark purple and brown. Perhaps like the burnt trunks high on the mountain, there will even be something left to testify to the fact that I stood up on behalf of certain purposes, ideals, and living things, long after my spirit is gone. Perhaps that is one of the ways my material body may touch the fingertips of eternity.

If my life is measured by nothing more than an obsession with paying bills, how easily I will be forgotten and how meaningless will be the expanse of my days. If this is the only world we create for one another and for future generations, how dark and pathetic is the time in which we live.

If this is an honest and accurate appraisal of our current time, however, how vital it is for each and every one of us to sow the seeds of the next world-wide renaissance. I have often remarked that writers and artists must persist in their work because they do not always create for their own generations. Indeed most of them have composed their music, written their words, and created their paintings for hundreds of thousands of people who were not yet born within the artists' own lifetimes.

Is the work for that reason less important? If that were so, we would not have sufficient work to fill even a single art museum or library. If that were so, it is doubtful the human spirit would ever have developed wings with which to fly to heaven. If that were so, the very idea and word of heaven would probably not exist.

Yet on those days when the walls of a corporate office day-job seem to close in on me, insisting that they are the limits of my reality, the reality of heaven is all that gets me through. Though I may never be able to fully define it (do I need to?), though the Christian notions of clouds and harp music are a poor caricature, though all the poetry and painting and music still hasn't fully envisioned such a transcendent realm, even these shadows are enough to keep me going, just as the shadows of undiscovered realities lead the person out

of Plato's metaphorical cave. In the larger scope of eternity, I believe it is only the growth of the human soul which matters, the degree to which we have learned to embody divine love, wisdom, creativity, and life itself. That such life is learned and manifested by the supposedly mundane tasks of daily existence is the magic of the hat which conceals the rabbit the magician will reveal, the box which allows the passage of the saw without injuring its occupant, and the flock of doves bursting from the empty silk handkerchief. It is not so much to be completely defined as to be simply appreciated, celebrated, and applauded.

The real goal is to learn to see the magic latent within everything and not stumble across the surface of life blindfolded. The goal is not to over-analyze everything, until we have reduced it to its smallest and most indivisible pieces, but rather to perceive its complexity and myriad of integrated harmonious pieces from the first glance we give to it. We look but see so little of what is there. We listen, but so many subtle harmonies escape our notice. It does not need to always be this way. We can learn to see a little more each day

**"If all we ever perceive
is the light of the sun
each morning,
we will have witnessed
one of the most
fundamental miracles
of life."
---Sister Who**

The Allegorical Shoe Store

A huge shoe store, so big that it extends into everyone's local neighborhood and offers literally millions of styles of shoes, but is (like most retail stores) always either understaffed or staffed by people with inadequate product knowledge.

A young woman walks in and is met by the one very experienced member of the staff.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes, I'd like to see something in a size six, please, rather dressy, because I want to look good at my new job which I'm starting tomorrow."

Glancing downward, the salesperson winces and responds, "I may be mistaken, but judging by all the years I've been fitting shoes to feet, it would appear you need at least a size eight."

"Are you accusing me of having big feet?" the woman replied hotly.

"No ma'am," the salesperson answered quickly, "just of possibly needing something larger than a size six in order to avoid a painfully tight fit."

"I have requested a size six and I will accept nothing else," the customer replied coldly.

With a shrug of resignation, the salesperson went to the stockroom, returned with a mildly elegant pair of off-white shoes, size six, and the sale was completed without even the briefest test-fitting.

A week later, the woman returned with the shoes.

"They hurt my feet constantly and broke down almost at once. I want my money back, since these are obviously shoes of very inferior quality."

The salesman examined the shoes, seams stretched beyond repair, and shrugged. There was no use arguing with the woman but it would definitely be a mistake to ever sell her another pair of shoes. "Here's your money," the salesperson said, "now please take your business to one of my competitors since I do not wish to sell you a pair of shoes ever again."

The young woman stared back in shock but left without saying another word.

Another day a young student entered the

store, requesting a size twelve of a particular trendy sports shoe. A young apprentice salesman who'd greeted the customer first glanced at the more experienced salesperson for a moment.

Again the salesperson glanced toward the customer's feet. "Sir, wouldn't a size nine be more correct for your feet?"

"I suppose so," the young man began awkwardly, "but I want them to be noticed. It's what everybody's wearing these days and the name alone seems to really impress the girls at school."

With a shrug of resignation, the salesperson nodded and turned back to other tasks. The shoes were brought and the young man was so taken by the color and style of the shoes that he really didn't pay attention to the way his feet slipped this way and that within the shoes, as he walked across the floor a bit to test them.

"I'll take them," he said, without another thought.

A week later he returned--on crutches.

"What happened?" the apprentice exclaimed.

"Tried to do a quick turn in the middle of a basketball game and twisted my ankle," the student mumbled. "My parents sent me back to get something more traditional to wear as soon as I'm able to walk on it again."

One afternoon a somewhat elderly person entered and was greeted with a warm smile by the experienced salesperson. "After all these years, it is still so wonderful to see you, still coming to the same store my father opened even before I was born."

"You've always sold me good quality shoes," came the response, "why should I go anywhere else?"

"My father used to tell me you were his most faithful customer and that your first pair of shoes were some simple thing to wear to school."

"That's right. I wore those out a long time ago, though."

"And that very comical pair of sequined platform clogs you bought for a Halloween costume one year."

"Those I still have in a back closet