

THE MINISTRY OF GOING IN

By Christine Paice

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This is what happens
I go in
sweep the floor
clear the dishes
interview the Secretary of State over a flat white
and lamington
and ask about Afghanistan and post modern democracy
in a political vacuum
I forget to ask if she wants sugar with that

This is what happens
I go in
sweep the floor
stack plates
dry cutlery
make sure the knives
are really really shiny
and ask the Minister for Dreaming
if I need a new paradigm to contain my thoughts

There was a knife once that was not
as shiny as the others
it was held up as an example
of what can happen
if you're careless
an unclean knife
half a second and your whole life changes

I go in
sweep the floor
foam the milk
and wonder
if there is too much importance
placed on the size of a take away cup
milk jugs are full
of constant fluctuations
and I ask the Minister for Intermittently Good Behaviour
how he is adjusting to the global downturn in fortune cookies
he says there is always another biscuit to be had

This is what happens
sometimes I don't go in
I run in the wind
a gory phantom with a large
coconut shell necklace
I say gory on account of the beetroot I have peeled
and I ask the Minister for Outsized Accessories
if I have gone too far
in my quest and she says
she would wear that far mountain and two intertwined planets
if she could get them round her bloody neck

This is what happens
I go in
there are people
waiting at the counter
I take one not-so-shiny-as-it-should-have-been knife
and excise my bad intentions
and I ask the Minister for Procrastination
is it always as bad as they say
he says not if you catch it in time and do something about it

This is what happened
you went in
made muffins
and cappuccinos
ordered milk and bread
and did something about it
but didn't catch it in time
you asked a doctor what the results were
and he said you'd better come in

You went in
swinging your wooden spoon
like a pendulum
backwards and forwards
into the dark
big black crow cleared his throat
and crow ordered fast
before you had time
to catch your breath
crow caught it for you

You and crow
riding a spoon
into the cold mysterious night
crow's fierce black wings
beating the sky
and I asked the Minister For Last Things if it was true
that after you die you turn into a star
and he said he was looking into it

This is what happens
I go in
water has flooded
from the fridge
I swim round tables
like a dolphin
and I ask the Minister for New Beginnings
what she does when waves threaten to engulf her
and everyday feels strange
she says take a larger boat and throw your guilt over the side

This is what happens
I go in
my hair the shape
of a dolphin's fin
someone hums the music from Jaws
and I ask the Minister for Psychic Disinformation
how many times he has blamed poltergeists for his own bad temper
and he says I am in the wrong film

This is what happens
I go in
sweep floor
rearrange shelving
stare at your photo
and stack my own
small bones
in with the coffee cups
I get everything right
it is one of those rare sparkling days
and I ask the Minister for Myself when I was last elected.
