

## Pain and I – audio transcript

Pain and I is written and performed by Sarah Hopfinger, with music & sound creation and design by Alicia Jane Turner

Writing key:

All spoken text is in non-italics.

*All sound descriptions and notes about the spoken text are in italics.*

*Sound: Silence*

Dear audience member,

Welcome.

Take however long you need to set up this audio and to settle in to where you are.

This performance is best experienced on headphones. If you don't have access to headphones, it's best experienced through speakers of as high a quality as possible. A transcript of this performance is also available.

You're invited to be alone – alone with yourself, a support worker or care giver, or perhaps with a human or animal companion. Choose somewhere that you will not be distracted or disturbed, where you can let yourself experience this performance. If you wish to be inside, choose a room where you can relax. If you wish to be outside, choose a place where you feel safe and at ease.

Throughout this experience feel free to place yourself in ways that are most comfortable for you – you might sit, stand, lie down, lean, move around, make noise, close your eyes. You could be in your bed, in a bath, on a mat, in a wheelchair, on a sofa, in the sunshine, in a city, in the countryside, in a park, on a bench, or somewhere else. You can change between positions, and between stillness and moving, at any time. If the content of this performance becomes too much, you can stop it, and return to it if you want at another point. You can pause and start this recording whenever you wish.

You do not need to be a polite audience member. You're invited to do what is most caring for your body and mind. This space does not merely accept you but needs you to be you for it to be itself. This space shakes its head at pressure and judgement. It wants another way. It's a space to rest into your body, to acknowledge yourself however you are, and to settle in to the richness of listening to pain.

*Sound: The music opens with long, tender layers that slowly build into a gentle, simple rhythmic pattern. Layers of light, quick, high pitched finger picked strings join*

*in, accompanied by emotive harmonies and a high shimmering layer that sits on top. It is playful, airy and welcoming.*

Hello. My name's Sarah, I'm 33 years old and I am in companionship with pain.

I'm trying to listen to you, to get to know your qualities, character and atmosphere, to mark you, honour you, see what you have to say and let you take centre stage. I hope that I am giving you your due.

One: The Turn Towards

I have brown, blonde and grey hair that is short on the top and long at the back. I am standing facing away – seeing you with the back of my body.

The air calls you in.

The air calls you in.

The dust settles you here.

The breathes stroke your presence.

Welcome.

Welcome to the wakeful nights, the unease of daybreak, the hindered steps, the troubled ones.

Welcome to the stiffening and shrinking of my world, the stretching of my fear and despair, the lengthening of my discontent.

Shake me up and shatter me, leave me lying crying in the fields, let me flounder. Flame up and compress my smiles and words, undo my sense of self, shoot me from the inside and ache it into my identity.

The air calls you in, speaking in a slowed disenchanted voice: there is space for you here, space for the unhealed.

The touches of breezes and whirlwinds that have brought you here, the currents of quiet and chaos. . . sound out their bells, booming your validity, vastness and vulnerability.

Welcome the unchosen ones, the ones left out, the disruptive, uncomfortable, quietened, shameful ones.

The air calls you in.

The air calls you in.

Your shimmering of the unbearable - your shadow sides – crisscross the now, and we scream come back to me, there's space for you here.

Your kiss of brokenness, your kiss of damage, it wets, softens and calms.

*Sound: The long tender layers and simple rhythmic pattern continues, before it morphs in to a more rich and confident rhythm that encompasses you. It is warm, kind and inviting.*

## Two: The Holding Up

I am 5 foot 3 inches. I have a long back and short limbs. I'm turning around, my hands resting on my heart and stomach, rising and falling with my breath. I stretch out and open my arms, I do it again and again and again.

I am scared of this body.

I'm scared of this body.

I'm scared of this body.

I am scared of it's unpleasant ways, of it's threatening, dizzying, draining and unpredictable ways, of it's weaker-than-it-was ways, of it's loss-of-life ways.

I am scared of it's discs-and-muscles-deteriorating-and-thinning-causing-pressure-unseen-on-nerves-pressing-prodding-shooting-winding-around-everywhere ways.

I am scared of the weightiness-expanding, of the pushing-tightening-flaming-heat-thickening-the-emotional-physical-mood-tiring-small-and-hugeness.

I am scared of what has been worn away and is unrecoverable.

I am scared of this damage.

I'm scared of this damage.

I am scared that I am to blame, that I could have done more to help before it got so bad, and that I have pushed this body too far.

I am scared that this body forgets about its possibilities, enthusiasms and alive-ness.

I am scared of being attached to an ideal of this body and wishing it would return to it's former glory.

I'm scared of living with too much regret.

I am scared that this body isn't getting what it needs and that I am not up to the task.

I am scared that this body will keep getting overwhelmed and that more damage will be done.

I am scared of this body.

I am scared of this body.

*Sound: It begins with single, cold notes like frozen beams of light, before more single notes join in from different directions and angles, as though they are surrounding you. The single notes become quieter, and are replaced by a very dry fluttering, before they coalesce. It is ethereal, spacious and open.*

### Three: The Times Unwind

I am walking in haphazard directions, jumping, turning, stopping, retracing my steps, winding around. Now I am spinning, leaping, running, stamping, skipping. I am taking up a lot of space.

I am being still

I am still

Here

You are somewhere here

You are here

You are here and here

Here

You are

You are

You

You are like this

You are from here to there

There to here

There you are

Are you

Here

Are you

You

You

You

You

You-wah

You-wah

Wah, wah . . .

Ah ah ah aih aye aye aye | | | | | . . . .

| | | | | dance with you

*Sarah repeats the following line for two minutes*

I dance with you.

*Sound: It begins with undulating electronic waves spiralling, joined soon by spiralling high pitched clusters. It twinkles and swirls. A deep, heavy bass flows underneath it, urging it through. A slow, throbbing beat is joined by a high pitched clap as Sarah's voice slowly fades out and the music drowns her out. It is euphoric, climactic.*

Four: The Low Down

I am curving and straightening my body. I am stroking my face with my finger tips. I am pushing my hands up and down my face. I have my head deep in my elbow. I am dancing my hands and arms around my head and I am looking at you through the business of my moving hands.

*The following lines are repeated in various combinations for about four minutes.*

I cannot forget you

I cannot forgive you

I cannot leave

I cannot brush you off

I cannot be rid of you

I cannot be sure

I cannot be bothered

I cannot see you

I cannot trust you

I cannot live like this

I cannot remember what pleasure feels like

I cannot hug and kiss you

I cannot make love with you

I cannot connect

I cannot be healed

*Sound: Silence*

*The following lines are whispered.*

## Five: The Going On Returning

I sit down, I am close to you – a body breathing nearby.

Things have been so hard between us.

There was a time when I wasn't sure if we would survive.

We would lie together, sit, walk and eat together, constantly be together.

I'd try to find ways to be a tiny bit comfortable with you.

I did all of things that had helped in the past, like taking things easy, giving you space and time, responding to you rather than simply being angry.

But nothing helped.

We were so stuck.

I couldn't see a way out.

I talked about you to my friends and family - they were worried and wanted things to be better.

But soon this felt like pressure, so I stopped talking about you.

It felt easier to be quiet.

*Sound: Single, sporadic repeated notes appear from the silence, that echo into the distance. They are then accompanied by the ethereal beams of light and dry fluttering. It whispers and ripples, like pushing out into water. The mood shifts as we transition into the next section, becoming more sombre.*

*The following lines transition from whispering into speaking.*

We kept having to leave in the middle of things - the middle of dinner, visiting people, work, performances, conversations.

I cancelled so many plans that I started to not make them.

I was tired of explaining about us.

It was better not to do things, not to see people, to be isolated, to retract into myself, and to be in this difficulty just with you.

If I'm honest, I was embarrassed by you.

I didn't want others to see how bad things had got.

My embarrassment turned into a deep shame.

I wished you would disappear for good.

I wanted my life back, a life without you.

I was also so bored.

It was so boring.

I was bored of you, of us and our problems, of how entwined we'd got.

Inside of the boredom and shame I became unsure of who I am.

*Sound: The long, tender layers begin this section, but they feel colder. High pitched notes like shards of glass carry us through in a slow rhythm. The layers of light, quick, high pitched finger picked strings return alongside emotive flowing harmonies. The deep heavy bass begins to flow underneath it, with the slow throbbing beat we recognise from earlier. They all join together in a climactic ending, subsumed by a crashing wave. It is reflective and hopeful, it is reaching towards something. Following this climax, we return to the simple rhythmic pattern from earlier. It is silky, minimal and expansive.*

I still sometimes live in fear that you will continue to spoil my life, to trouble me, unwind me, make me disappear, be my crisis.

I've spent a lot of time hating you and I've used so much energy up to carry on hating you. I've hidden you, ignored you, played you down, tested you and planned many times that this time you will leave me. But you've hung around. You've stayed with me for 19 years. You've seen me grow into an adult, leave home, study, make friends, fall in love, fall out of love, work hard, be sure of myself, overdo it, lose my confidence, grieve, become an aunty, welcome in a new sexuality and start to grow grey hair.

Even when you're not loud, not making yourself so known, I think about you every day.

You're never not here.

You are so committed to me.

You have a pattern that you don't stick to.

You are so present and ungraspable.

You are too real and you are not always believed.

I know you too well and I don't know you at all.

You might never leave me.

You are my intimate companion.

You ask for gentleness and another kind of time.

You know about rage, shame, anxiety and panic.

You know about kindness, fragility and calm.

You know about those lines that go 'ring the bells that still can ring, ring the bells that still can ring, forget your perfect offering, there is a crack a crack in everything, there is a crack a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in, that's how the light gets in, that is how the light gets in'.

You contain power.

You contain love.

Because of you I care more.

The air calls you in.

The air calls you in.

The dust settles you here.

The breathes stroke your presence.

Welcome.

There is space for you here, space for the unhealed.

*Sound: silence*

Dear audience member,

Thank you for being wherever you are. You may need to take your time to move from this experience into the rest of your day or evening. You're invited to do what is most caring for your body and mind. This space shakes its head at pressure and judgement. It wants another way.

Thank you for listening and goodbye.