



Inside: Inside OutOutside In (An Inside Novel)

By Maria V. Snyder



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Until Trella—the Queen of the Pipes, as some call her—gets involved with a revolution that will rock her world....

Trella was just doing a favor for a friend—her only friend. Hiding an injured man from the Pop Cops seemed easy enough—though dangerous. But then she discovered that the myths of Outside might be real....

Being Inside's hero only left Trella with more work. Ducking those responsibilities, she continued to explore her stark world—and found something she never expected. *Strangers*. From Outside...



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Maria V. Snyder is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the Study series, the Glass series, the Healer series, *Inside Out*, and *Outside In*. Born and raised in Philadelphia, she earned a Bachelors of Science degree in Meteorology from Penn State and a Master of Arts degree in fiction writing from Seton Hill University. Unable to part ways with Seton Hill, Maria is currently a teacher and mentor for the MFA program. Find her on the Web at MariaVSnyder.com.

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A vibration rippled through my body. I awoke in semi-darkness, unsure of my location. Reaching out with my hands, I felt smooth sides arching up and in. My fingers touched overhead. Pipe.

A distant roar caused unease, but with sleep fogging my mind, I couldn't quite grasp its significance. The pipe's vibrations increased as the thunder grew louder. Water. Coming toward me. Fast.

I scrambled in the narrow space. My bare feet slipped on the sleek surface of the pipe as I advanced toward a faint square of bluelight emanating from the open hatch. It seemed an impossible distance to reach.

Cogon's voice in full lecture mode echoed in my mind as the water rushed closer. "Someday, Trella. You'll screw up and there will be bits of you raining out of the showers."

I reached the hatch and dove headfirst through the opening, convinced the water rushed at my heels. Landing on the hard floor, I shot to my feet and slammed the door shut. When I finished sealing the hatch, the whole pipe shuddered, then the vibrations calmed as the water returned to its normal flow. The metal cooled under my fingers, and I leaned my sweaty forehead against it, catching my breath.

That was close. Soft bluelight glowed all around the water-filtering machinery. Hour eighteen: I knew by the rush of water. The upper workers adhered to a strict schedule.

I checked my tool belt to make sure nothing was broken and my flashlight still worked. Then I climbed from the ductwork and made my way to level two by taking a shortcut through an air conduit. Traveling through the pipes and air shafts, I avoided seeing my fellow scrubs. But my peace and quiet ended too soon as I opened the vent, swung down and landed in the middle of a crowded corridor, scattering scrubs.

Someone knocked into me. "Watch it!"

"Come to mingle with the lowly scrubs, your highness?" A mocking bow.

Used to curses and hostile glares, I shrugged. The mass of people in the tight corridor jostled and pushed me along. Life in the lower two levels teamed with scrubs at all hours of the week. They moved from work to their barracks and back to work. We were called scrubs because rust and dust were the twin evils of Inside and must be kept at bay; however, scrubs also maintained the network of mechanical systems which kept

both uppers and lowers alive.

The scrubs shoved. They frowned. They complained. I hated every one of them. Except Cog. No one hated Cog. He listened. Empathized with tales of misery. Made people smile. A rare occurrence—as rare as a person like Cogon.

I headed toward the cafeteria in Sector G2. It stayed open around the clock. As far as I could tell, Inside's length and width equaled a square with four levels. All constructed with sheet metal. Overall measurements, by my calculations—for reasons unknown Inside's exact dimensions and specifications were classified—were two thousand meters wide by two thousand meters long by twenty-five meters high. Each level was divided into nine areas.

If I drew a square with two lines across and two lines down inside it, I would end up with nine smaller squares. The first row's three squares would be labeled A, B and C, the next row D, E and F, and the last row G, H and I. With this configuration, there were four Quadrants A, C, G and I, which were Inside's corners, and five Sectors B, D, E, F and H. That was the basic map of each level. Boring, unoriginal, and predictable to say the least.

The cafeteria and dining room for the lower two levels encompassed all of Sector G2. The number two meant it was on the second level. Even a four-hundred-week-old scrub couldn't get lost. Hydroponics resided directly below in Sector G1—the lowest level—making it easy for the food growers to send vegetables to the kitchen scrubs.

The hot, musty smell of people packed together greeted me at the cafeteria's door as the noise of them slammed into me. I paused, deciding if eating was worth being in the same room with so many scrubs. My stomach growled, overruling my reluctance.

The line to get food remained perpetually long. I took a tray and waited, ignoring the stares. Most scrubs changed from their work clothes to wear the drab-green off-duty jumpers before eating, but I was scheduled to scour an air duct at hour twenty. So I remained in my formfitting uniform. The slippery dark blue fabric covered every inch of skin except for my hands, feet and head. The material helped me slide through the tight heating ducts when I cleaned them. And I didn't care if I was the only person not wearing moccasins. My mocs were back at my bunk in Sector F1. With so many scrubs around to clean, the floor didn't even have a chance to become dirty.

Pushing my tray along the metal shelf, I pointed to what I wanted from three different choices. The big containers held either green-, yellow- or brown-colored slop, and they all smelled like moldy vegetables. The food was easy to prepare, easy to cook and best of all easy to reuse. I didn't even bother reading the names of the dishes. If the kitchen staff called it a casserole, a quiche, a stew or a soup, it all tasted the same. A pulpy, leafy spinach flavor dominated the other ingredients lurking in the recipe.

To be fair to the cooks, hydroponics didn't offer much in the way of variety. Mass production of the hardier vegetables had replaced diversity, and there was only so much a person can do with mutton. I didn't want to be fair, though. I just wanted something different to eat.

After being served, I found an empty seat, and let the discord of multiple conversations roll over me.

"Where've you been?" a voice asked over the din. I looked up at Cog's broad face as he pressed into a seat next to mine.

"Working," I said.

"You were supposed to be done at hour ten."

I shrugged. "Got to make sure the pipes are squeaky clean for the uppers."

"Yeah. Like it would take you that long," Cog said. "You were sleeping in the pipes again."

"Don't start."

"You're going to get hurt—"

"Who'd care? One less scrub to feed."

"Grumpy, aren't we? What's the matter, Trella? Get wet?" Cog smirked, but couldn't hold the expression for more than a second. He was soon smiling, unaffected by my mood.

"Shouldn't you be changing a fan belt or something?" I asked, trying to be nasty, but Cog ignored me, knowing it was all an act—although with any other scrub, I wouldn't be acting.

He nodded to scrubs passing our table, calling out hellos and sharing his smile.

"How's the showerhead in washroom E2?" Cog asked one man.

"Much better," the man replied.

I had no interest in mundane details so I tuned out their conversation. Instead, I contemplated my only friend. Too big to fit into the pipes, Cog worked with the maintenance crew and did odd jobs. Most of it busywork, just like scrubbing. Too many idle hands had been deemed dangerous by the upper workers.

Scrubs also labored in the recycling plant, the infirmary, the care facility, hydroponics, the kitchen, the livestock yard, solid-waste facility or in the waste-water treatment plant. Most scrubs were assigned their jobs. A Care Mother noted the skills and aptitudes of each of her charges and recommended positions. My smaller size automatically matched me as a cleaning scrub. It suited me just fine.

"When's your next shift?" Cog asked.

"One hour."

"Good. Someone wants to meet you." Cog's eyes held an avid glow.

"Not another prophet. Come on, Cog, you know better."

"But this time—"

"Probably just like the last time, and the time before and the five times before that. All talk. No action, pushing false hope. You know they have to be employed by the upper officials to keep the scrubs from rioting."

"Trell, you're jaded. Besides, he asked for you by *name*. Said you were the only one who could help him." Cog seemed to think this divine calling should impress me.

"I have better things to do with my time." I picked up my tray, intent on leaving.

"Like sleeping in the pipes? Pretending you're all alone, instead of crammed in here with everyone else?"

I scowled at him. My fiercest frown, which usually resulted in some breathing room.

Cog stepped closer. "Come on. Hear the guy out."

Again, his face glowed with the conviction of a true believer. *Poor Cog*, I thought. How can he set himself up for another crushing disappointment? How can I turn him down? Especially when he was the only one who remained my friend despite my abuse. And who'd watched out for me, growing up in the care facility together.

"Okay. I'll listen, but no promises," I said. Perhaps I could expose this prophet as a fraud to keep Cog from becoming too involved.

Dumping our trays in the wash bins, we left the cafeteria. Cog led the way through the main corridors of the second level toward the stairs in Quad A2.

The narrow hallways of Inside had been constructed with studded metal walls painted white. Only Pop Cops' posters, spewing the latest propaganda, scrub schedules and the list of proper conduct could decorate common area walls on levels one and two. At least the massive bundles of greenery in every section of Inside helped break up the monotony. Although, if the plants weren't needed to clean the air, I was sure the Pop Cops would remove those, too.

I would never have had the patience to fight my way along the main paths, but Cog's thick body left a wake behind him. I followed along in this space, walking without effort and without touching anyone. A moment of peace.

We descended the wide metal steps. Cold stabbed the soles of my feet and I wished I had worn my mocs. Bare feet were useful in the air ducts, but not in the main throughways.

Cog led me to Sector B1. This prophet showed some intelligence. Sector B1 was filled with laundry machines. Rows upon rows of washers and dryers lined up like soldiers waiting for orders. The laundry was the most populated area, it had the largest number of workers, and every scrub in the lower levels came here for fresh uniforms.

Surrounded by a throng, the prophet had set himself up on an elevated dais near the break room so everyone could see him.

"...conditions are deplorable. The uppers have rooms to themselves and yet you sleep in barracks. But your suffering will not go unrewarded. You'll find peace and all the room you want Outside." The prophet's voice was strong. His words could be heard over the hiss and rattle of the machines.

I leaned over to Cog. "The wheelchair's a different touch. He'll gain the sympathy vote. What's his name?"

"Broken Man," Cog said with reverence.

I barked out a laugh. The prophet stopped speaking and focused his gray eyes on me. I stared back.

"You find something amusing?" Broken Man asked.

"Yes."

Cog stepped in front of me. "This is Trella."

The man in the wheelchair snapped his mouth shut in surprise. Obviously, I wasn't what he had expected.

"Children, I must speak with this one in private," he said.

I had to stifle another snort of disbelief. As if there was such a thing as privacy in the lower levels.

The crowd dispersed, and I was face-to-face with the latest prophet. Long blond hair, thin narrow face and no calluses on his hands. There were no blonds in the lower levels. Hair dye was a luxury reserved for the uppers only.

"Trella," he said in a deep, resonant voice.

"Look," I said. "You're more than welcome to seduce these sheep," I waved my hand at the working scrubs. "But don't sing your song of a better place to Cog. When you go back upstairs to reapply your hair dye, I don't want him left hurting."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mark Ames:

The experience that you get from Inside: Inside OutOutside In (An Inside Novel) will be the more deep you searching the information that hide inside the words the more you get considering reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Inside: Inside OutOutside In (An Inside Novel) giving you thrill feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in specific way that can be understood by means of anyone who read it because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We recommend you for having this kind of Inside: Inside OutOutside In (An Inside Novel) instantly.

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