

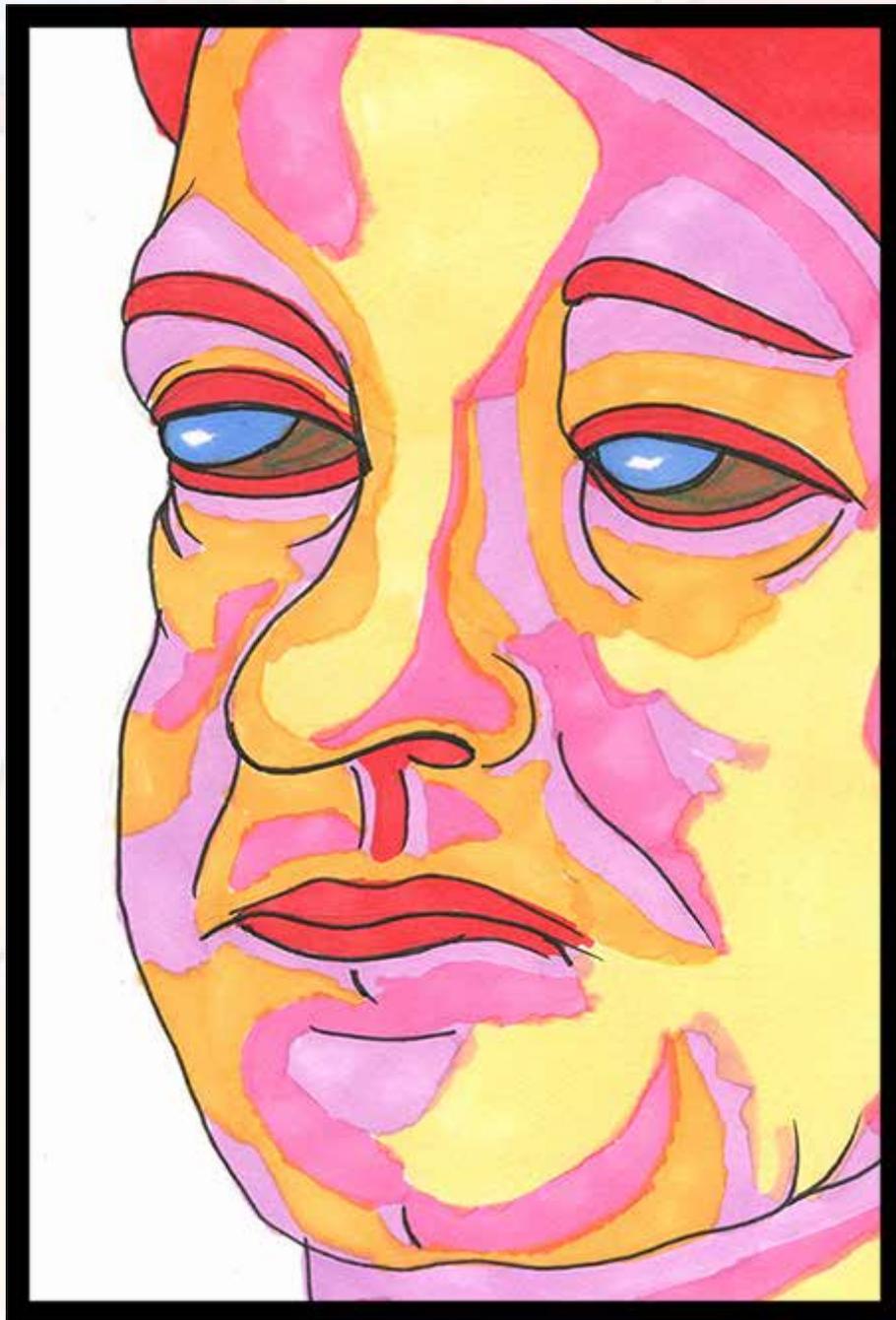
FACES

A performance in a zine

Created by Steven Fraser

Introduction

Faces is a Private Play. It is a story about looking, love and having a conversation with yourself.



What are Private Plays?

Private Plays are intimate performance encounters where the audience read illustrated performance scripts that are presented in a zine. Zines are self-published booklets that cover a wide variety of topics and are often made by marginalised people.

Private Plays usually occur in strange and atypical settings. **Faces** occurs in your home.



Private Plays are written to be read and enjoyed by autistic people.

Uncomfortable stimuli associated with crowded theatres and unfamiliar spaces are removed and the reader is in control of the pace of the story. You don't need to be autistic to read and enjoy.

More info at - <https://doittheatre.com/>



How Faces Works

Faces is a performance that happens in your home. Read the text and follow the instructions. There are illustrations to help you imagine the story.

The instructions are in **blue**.

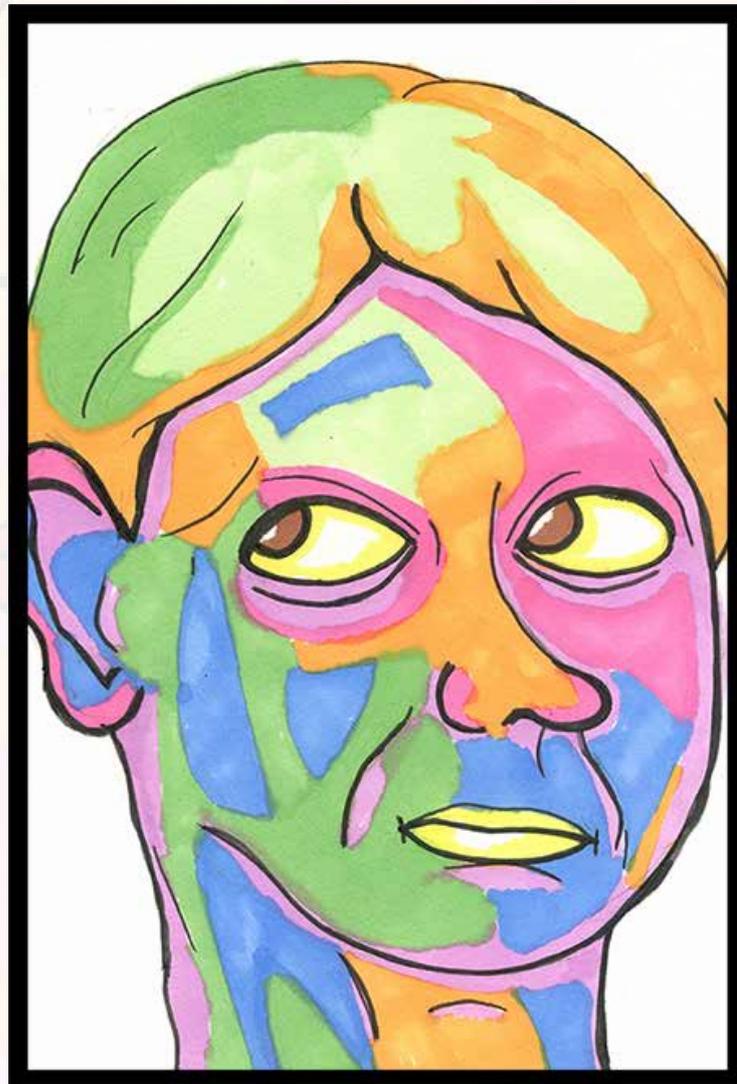
Also feel free to ignore the instructions and read the text at your own pace.

The story assumes you have a private and quiet space in your home and a room with a mirror. If you do not have access to a room like this, then feel free to imagine one if you can.



Faces is a digital Private Play. The zine is a pdf document that is best read on a smartphone or mobile device. Feel free to save the document to your phone and read it on the device while you sit in your own private space.

You can read the text out loud, or you can read it in your head if you prefer.



Mainspring Arts Series

For Mainspring Arts I have created a series of 3 digital zines. Each covers a topic in relation to autism and identity. The focus is on different senses and different forms of intimacy. The three stories are from the perspective of an unnamed protagonist and look to convey personal and distinctive emotions in a thoughtful and considered manner.

The feelings and emotions may not reflect your own, but the intention is to present storytelling in a new, abstract and atypical method.

Scene 1 - The Face

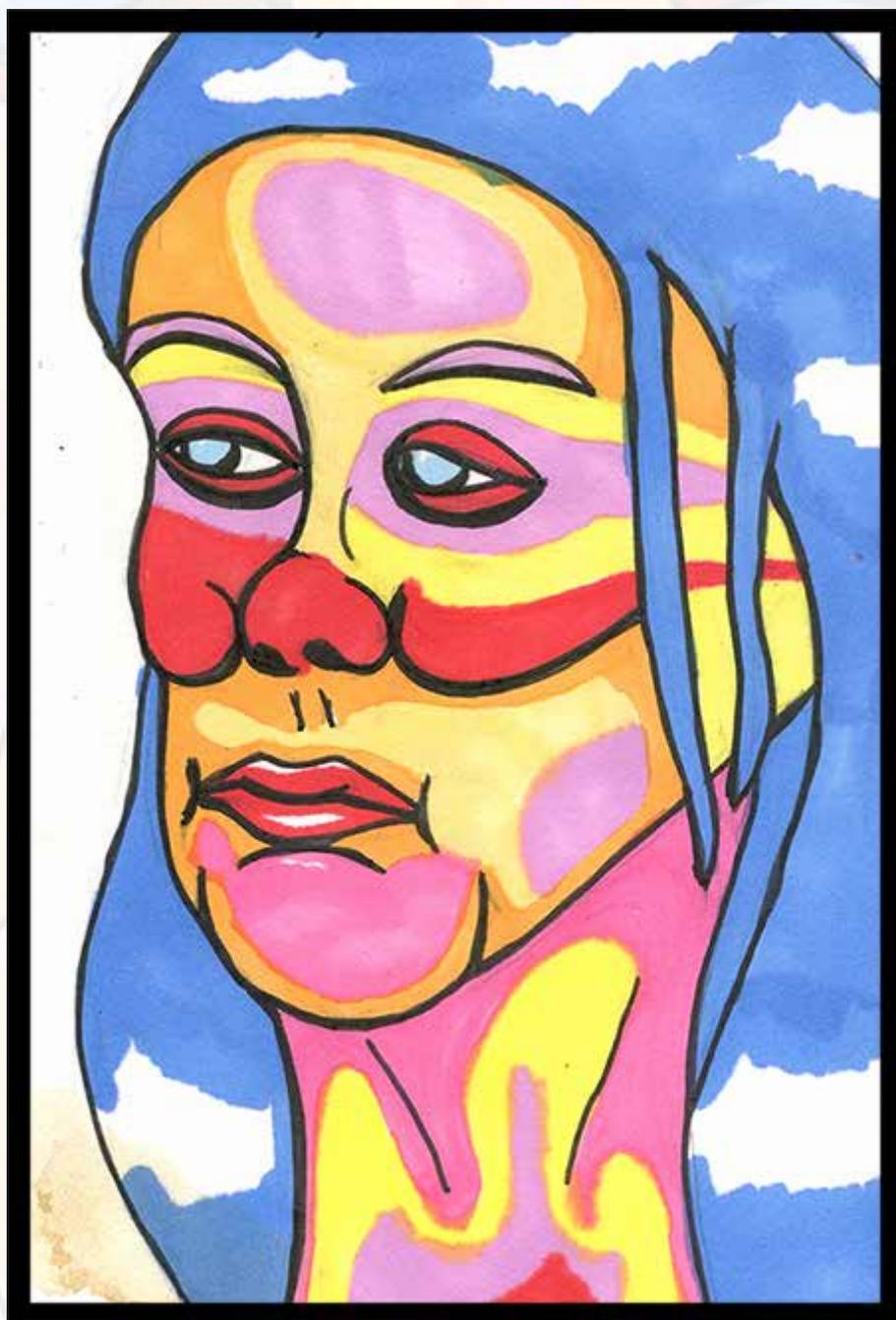
I want to talk about faces.
What they look like,
What they feel like,
How they are to touch,
What faces do.

I want to talk about how you can
recognise a face,
How you know a face is friendly,
Welcoming,
Upset,
Annoyed,
Happy,
Sad,
Hostile,
Confused,
Or angry.

Or even none of these.

Faces can be hard to decipher and hard to read.

This is a story about face blindness - or Prosopagnosia as it is also called.



Go to your bathroom or any room in your house with a mirror. Look in the mirror.

Look at your face. The curves, the colour, the texture.

Look at your face for as long as you can.

When you are ready, read the text on the next page.



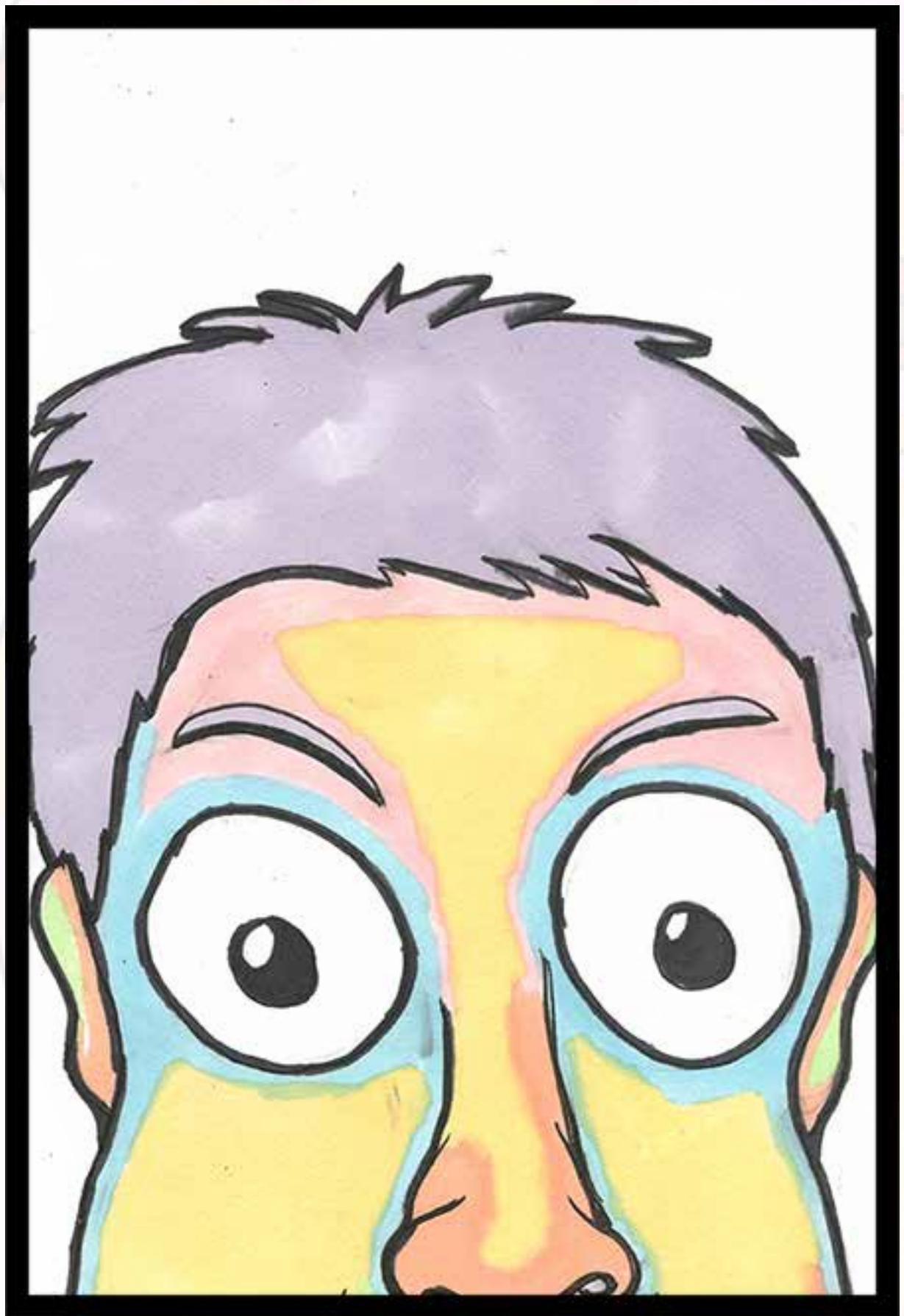
Scene 2 - The Hair

Not being able to recognise different faces is a problem.

You have to look at other parts of a person's body just to be able to notice someone.

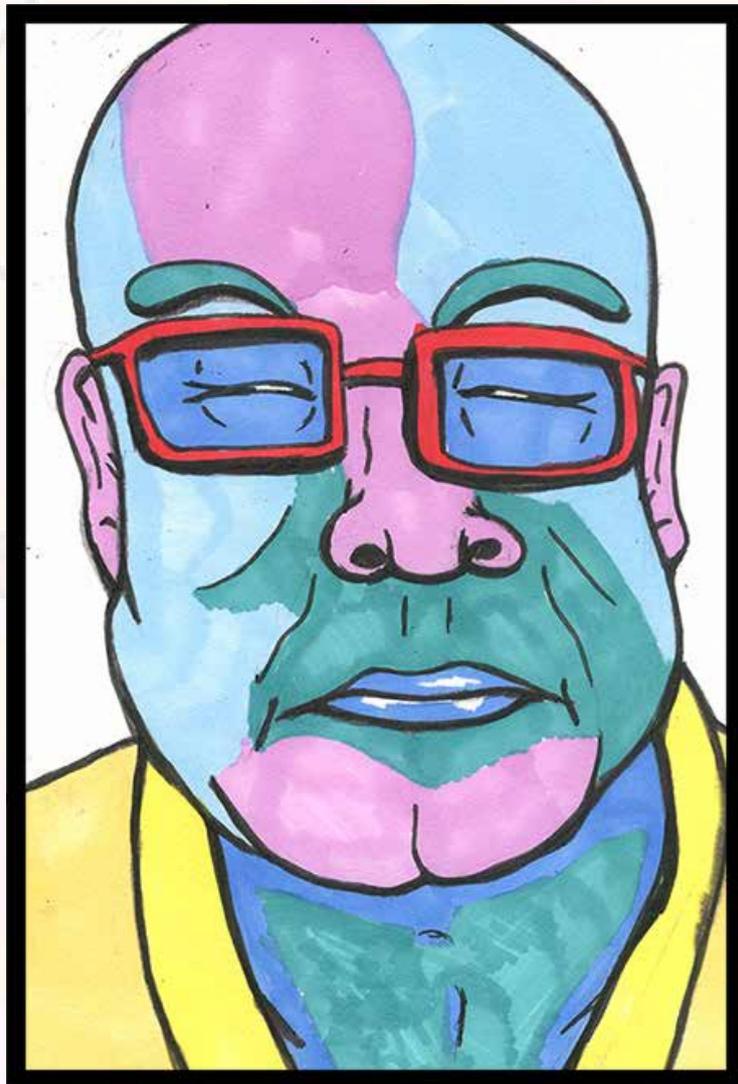
It's helpful when that particular person has a distinguishing haircut - If they have bright coloured hair, or if it is really short or really long for example.

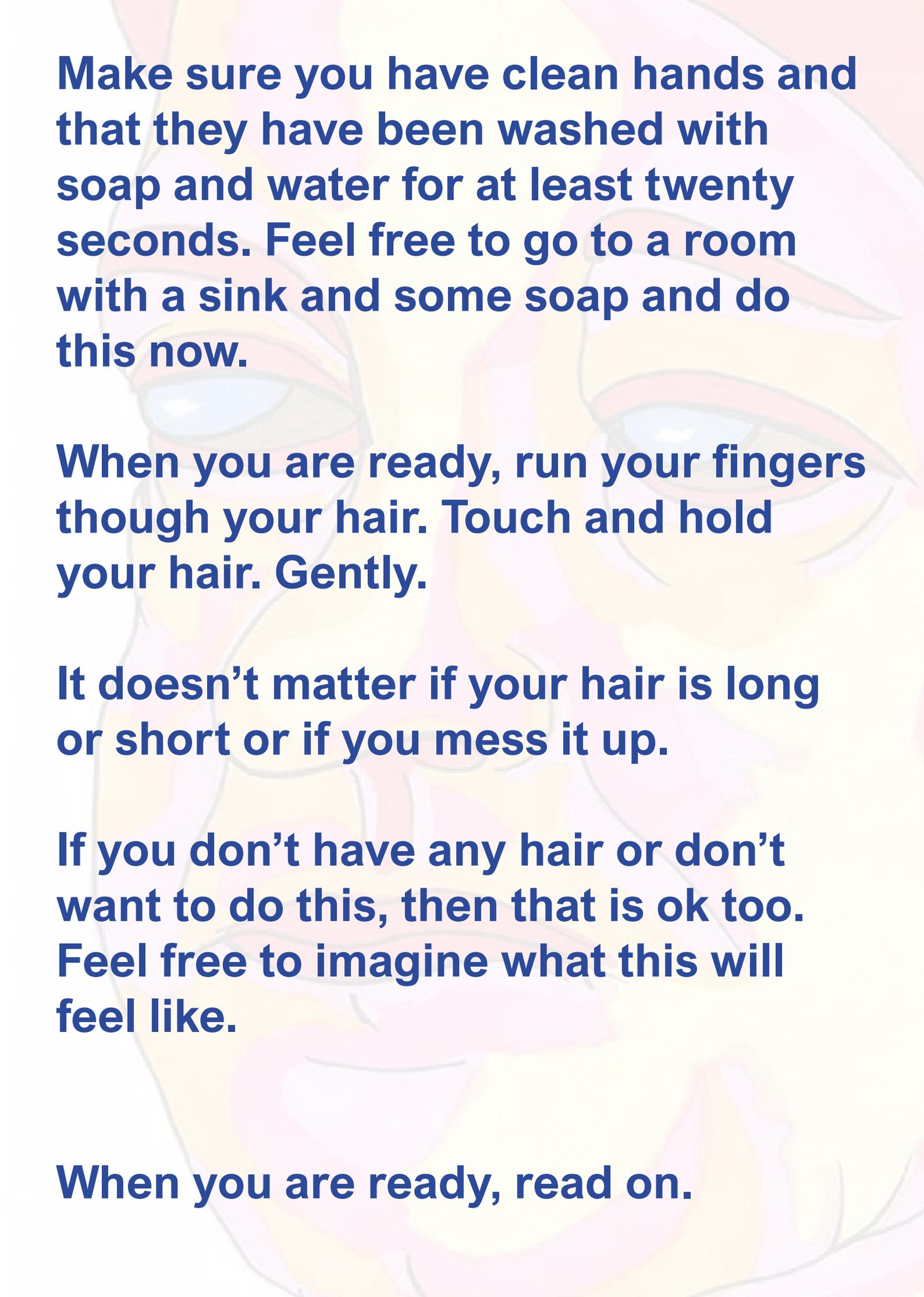
If there is something that makes the hair stand out and different from the average style, then you can focus your gaze on this and you can try to piece together the puzzle of who this person is.



- Short blue hair belongs to Karen.
- Long red hair and glasses belongs to Michael.
- No hair belongs to Samantha.
- Or whoever you are able to recognise.

It's like a game of *Guess Who* as you begin to realise who you are in front of and who you are speaking to.



The background features a soft, pastel-colored illustration of a person's face. The person has light skin and is shown from the nose up. Their hands are raised to their hair, with fingers gently touching the top of their head. The overall style is gentle and illustrative, with a focus on the tactile experience of touching one's hair.

Make sure you have clean hands and that they have been washed with soap and water for at least twenty seconds. Feel free to go to a room with a sink and some soap and do this now.

When you are ready, run your fingers through your hair. Touch and hold your hair. Gently.

It doesn't matter if your hair is long or short or if you mess it up.

If you don't have any hair or don't want to do this, then that is ok too. Feel free to imagine what this will feel like.

When you are ready, read on.

Scene 3 - Clothes

Clothes can also help - if someone has a particular style or if they tend to wear the same colours.

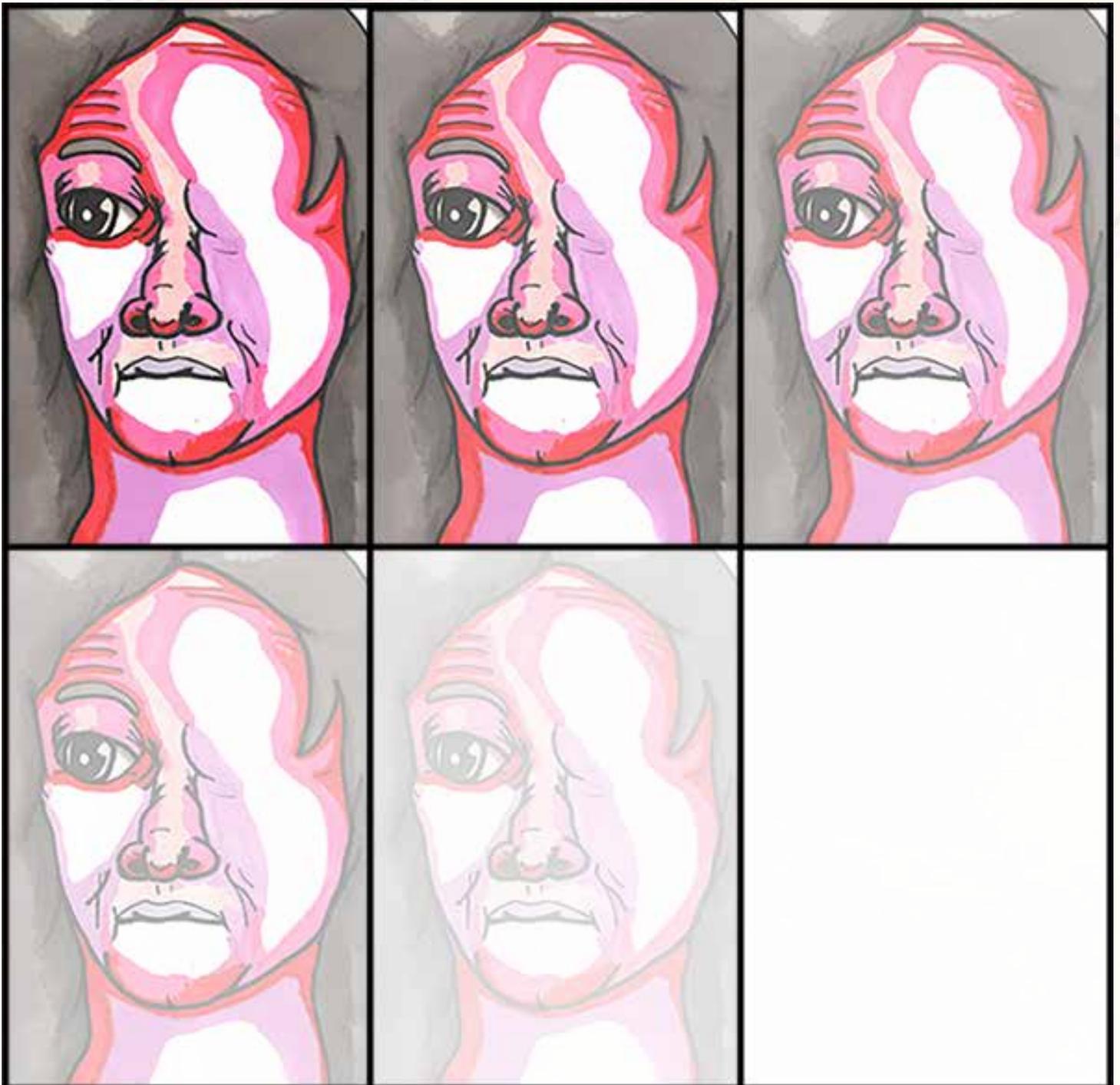
It's easier to recognise someone if they are always wearing blue shirts - or if they are a punk and wear black leather jackets and ripped jeans all time.

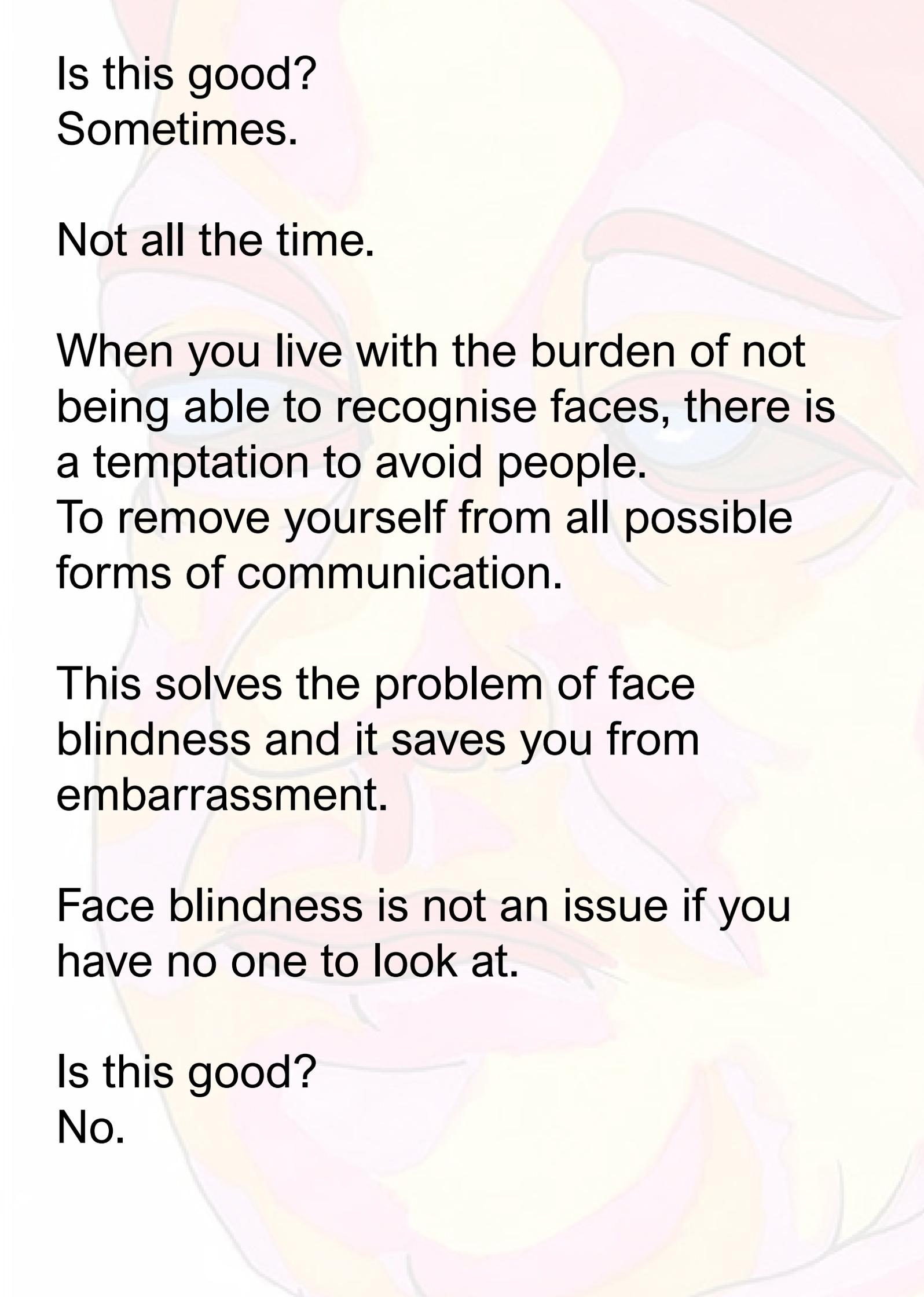
Being friends with people who consistently stand out can make them easier to recognise.

However, being around colourful people all the time means it is possible for you to fade away into the background.

You are never the centre of attention.
Never the brightest or loudest person
in the room.

You can fade away unnoticed.





Is this good?
Sometimes.

Not all the time.

When you live with the burden of not being able to recognise faces, there is a temptation to avoid people. To remove yourself from all possible forms of communication.

This solves the problem of face blindness and it saves you from embarrassment.

Face blindness is not an issue if you have no one to look at.

Is this good?
No.

Scene 4 - Movement

I think the way people walk can be very distinctive. The way the arms sway back and forth and how the feet land on the floor.

A person's weight constantly shifts when they are walking. Movement gives someone a distinctive look. You can tell a lot about a person by how they move.

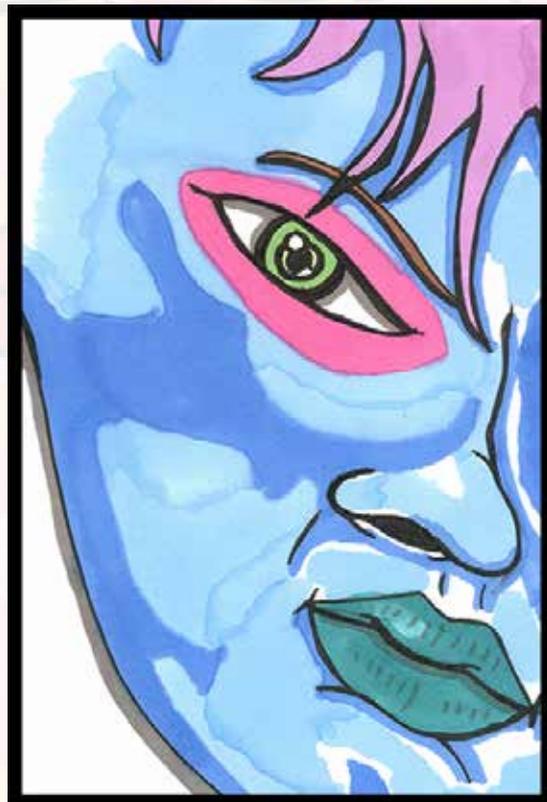
Tall people move differently from short people. Walking is a way to express femininity and masculinity.

Walking fast can say a lot about who you are as a person.

I am jealous of people who walk slow
all the time. They seem more relaxed.
At ease.
Happy.

**Go to a window in your house and
look out.
Wait for someone to walk past. Look
at the way they walk.**

**Do you understand what I mean?
If so read on. If not, then please still
read on.**



Scene 5 - Fear

Return to the room with the mirror, unless you are already there. Take a look at your face again. Do this for as long as you like.

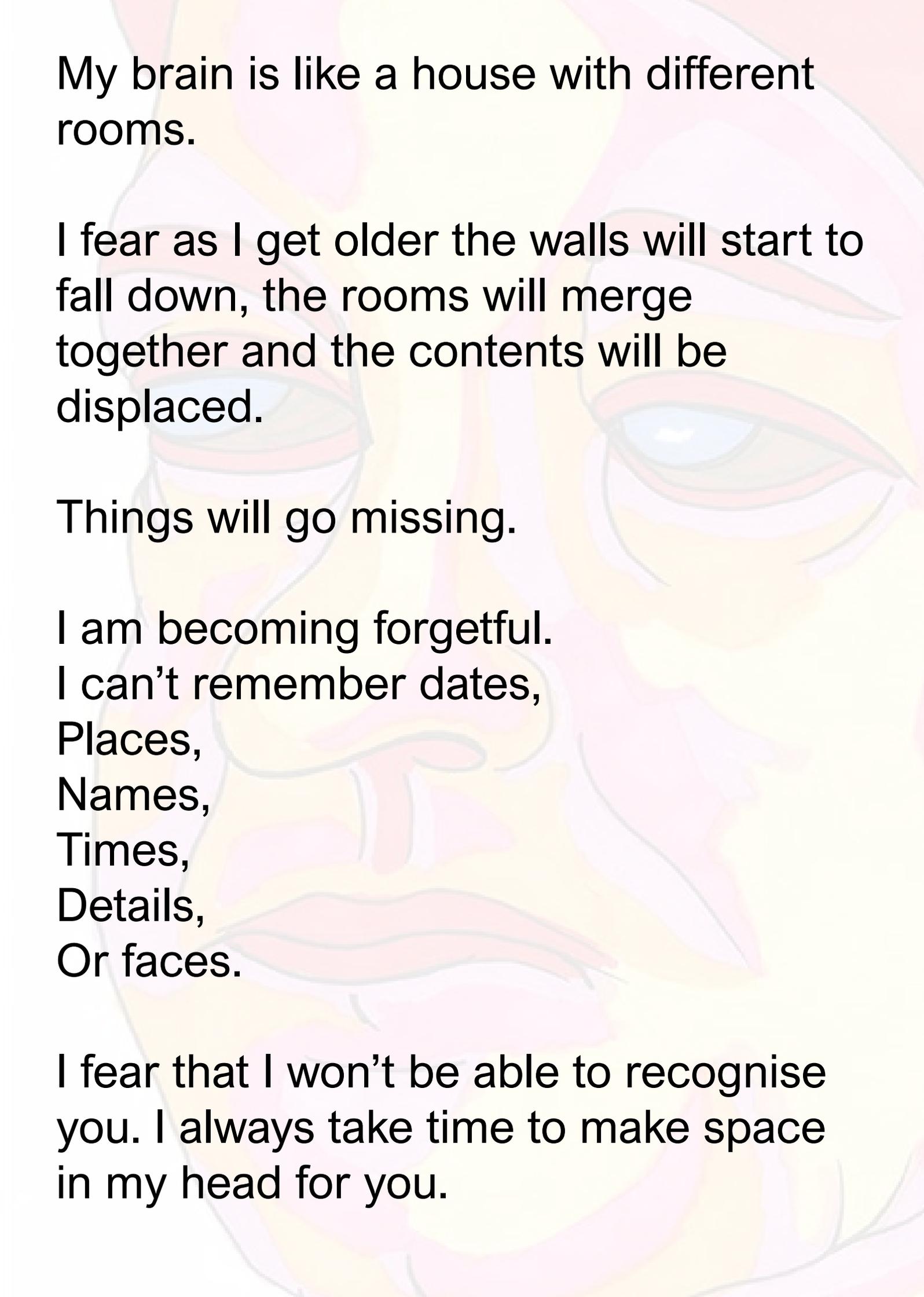
When you are ready, read on.

When you can't recognise a face, you have to be good at looking at everything else.

Not just seeing things, but actually taking the time to look. You need to take more in and recognise small details that other people may overlook.

You also need to have a good memory.

You have to compartmentalise your brain.



My brain is like a house with different rooms.

I fear as I get older the walls will start to fall down, the rooms will merge together and the contents will be displaced.

Things will go missing.

I am becoming forgetful.
I can't remember dates,
Places,
Names,
Times,
Details,
Or faces.

I fear that I won't be able to recognise you. I always take time to make space in my head for you.

I think about the different things you do and the way you act and I populate the rooms in my brain with these feelings.

I need to remember you, so I wrote you something.

I wrote it down so I can remember the details.

I hope you like it.



I wanted to let you know
that I see you.

I don't recognise you,
but I definitely see you.

And I know you.

I know who you are.

I know the parts of you
that you let me see.

I am aware that there are
some parts of you that you
want to keep hidden.

That is fine.

I Take what you say and I hold it close to me. I devour it and your words and your actions become part of me.

I do this without knowing exactly what your face looks like. It's the rest of you that has me.

Rarely do my eyes meet yours. I don't mind this.

Your words are fireworks.

Your ACTIONS are EXPLOSIONS that make me seem taller, warmer, better.

IT'S all of you that I like.

IT'S all of you that I love.

I can't see your face, but the rest of you has me.

Scene 6 - Ending

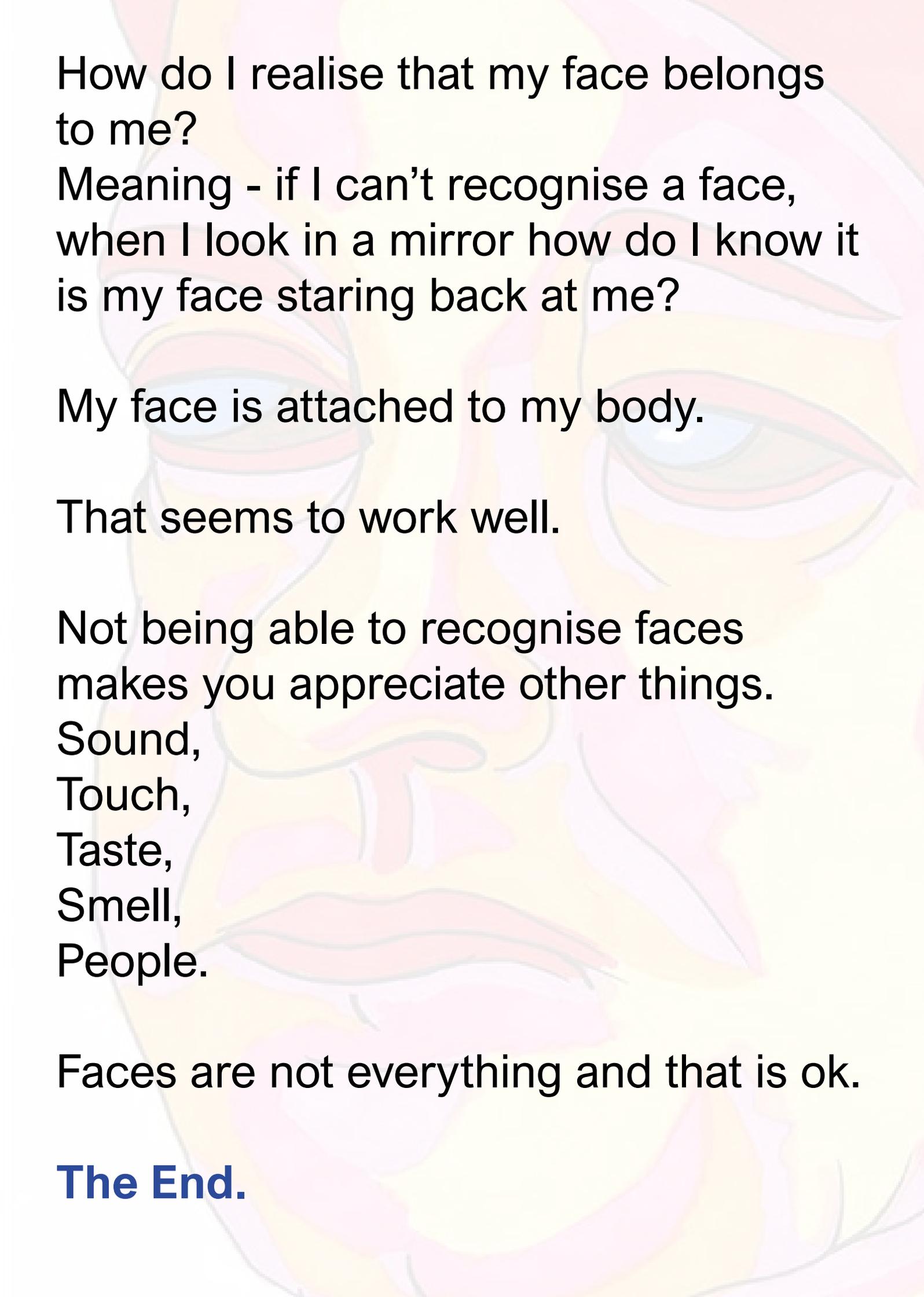
Are you still in the room with the mirror?

If so, look in the mirror.

Now leave the room and if you can, sit or stand in a room with no mirrors, reflections, pictures or photographs.

Make sure you are in a place in which you cannot see your face or the face of anyone else.

Try to make the room faceless.



How do I realise that my face belongs to me?

Meaning - if I can't recognise a face, when I look in a mirror how do I know it is my face staring back at me?

My face is attached to my body.

That seems to work well.

Not being able to recognise faces makes you appreciate other things.

Sound,
Touch,
Taste,
Smell,
People.

Faces are not everything and that is ok.

The End.

Credits

Steven Fraser is a writer, artist and animator who makes zines, comics, installations and short films. His work covers many topics and has a focus on autism and identity.

You can see more of his work here -

<https://stevenfraserart.com>

<https://doittheatre.com>

You can buy some of his zines and comics here -

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/DoltTheatre>

Social Media -

[@stevenfraserart](https://www.instagram.com/stevenfraserart)

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IN A DIGITAL ZINE.

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