

Nice Shoes: I met this man the other day, I didn't really appreciate the meeting while it was happening. I was in a rush. This man told me he was half Irish, half Yugoslav, and half Viking.

'Hey! That's too many halves.'

I thought I was being clever, but this guy just wanted to talk about Eric the Red or someone. He didn't listen to me, and I was in a hurry, so I didn't really listen to him either. He had nice shoes though. I should have told him that. But again, I was hurrying, and his mask was slipping off his mouth. The rest of him seemed kind of faded, the way curtains look after too many years of early mornings, complete with a layer of dust. Except for his shoes. Those were very clean, and had a lovely deep, full colour about them. I'd been a little hazy that week, but this strange conversation had made me feel better. I had something to think about. I remembered all those other strange encounters that had cropped up on street corners and the back seats of busses. Now I think about it there has always been a lot of mad people about. Just a feature of being alive I suppose. I worry I'll end up like one of these people. Starting conversations with strangers in lifts for the sake of it.

Doppelganger: That said, I was reminded of another man. This was when I was a glassie, I've since lost that job, like everyone else. When I had to clear glasses from the smoker's section of the pub I tried to hold my breath. I'd almost made it before I was stopped. This man was bearish, I could have stood behind him twice abreast and being perfectly invisible. He was as hairy as you'd expect and had a razor blade on fine chain around his neck. I'm pretty sure it was fake. But you can't say it's not a distinctive choice.

'Hey kid.'

There was a security guard in the room. But still.

'Can I get a photo with you?'

To this day this is still the second strangest encounter I've had with a random person. I was, apparently, the spitting image of this urban mountain man's younger self. This was not a pleasant encounter. It was alarming and uncomfortable. The memory, however, is rather sad. I feel nostalgic about it in this odd, bored way. And now I really kind of wish I was meeting people like this; I wish I'd paid attention to the man in the nice shoes.

Two years ago, two people decided that I was an introvert. Completely independent of each other as well. It seemed very wrong; I've never been shy, and I like people. But it stuck with me, and I thought it over. This idea that some people are just innately more attuned to the company of others, while the rest of us are naturally solitary, it sounds meaningful, like it speaks to some truth. And it did kind of make sense. I'm very bad at keeping in contact with people and I've never been one of the popular ones, and that's never mattered before. And then I think of those people I've known who seem to know everyone. These people will make you a friend of a friend of everyone in whatever little community we might be talking about. Exhausting. I couldn't do that. So it makes sense that these people are different in some abstract way. And that's fine to me. After all there are a lot of people who'll tell you you only really need one friend. It seems like a supremely sensible piece of wisdom. So maybe I am an introvert.

Please Like Me: Bus conversations are the weirdest. It's one thing to start talking to someone on the street where both parties can extract themselves. Imagine starting a conversation with a complete stranger knowing full well you might be stuck with them for another half hour. Imagine running out

of things to say. Although that said the people who start conversations on busses rarely run out of things to say. One notable bus conversation began with me texting a girl.

'How many words per minute d'yer reckon you can do'

I don't text her anymore, so clearly not enough. Maybe I should have concentrated on texting rather than this strange man who looked oddly like my religion teacher. My new friend was an ex-con. He was incredibly strong, capable of doing 2000 push ups in a row, and not to mention he was a master martial artist. Although he ran away when his girlfriend came for a certain appendage with kitchen shears. In reality he was kind of squishy looking. And the stories he told me were pretty familiar, the kind of ones you use to seem cool in front of school mates who aren't your friends. Or maybe the stories you mistakenly think will impress a crush. I wasn't impressed by him. He was funny though.

I've got a theory about people who begin conversations like these. They stop and talk to everyone on the street because of a need for connection. Not love or friendship. But a sort of proof of life. To confirm that there are still people out there who will think about them. A stupid theory, clearly unscientific.

Bicycle man: One day this man raced past me not wearing a whole lot and a little too much at the same time. His outfit was a singlet and shorts with no shoes as well as a helmet. One of those stupid helmets Australians wear. The ones with cable ties bristling like spines on an echidna, like spike proteins. He didn't have a bike though, just the helmet.

'Lost my car' he said without looking at me.

That still didn't explain the helmet.

'Looks like your dogs are taking you for a walk' he didn't look at me this time either, just kept racing on.

Ha ha ha, I've heard that joke so many times I should probably have a good comeback by now. I tried quickly to say something clever, but he was already halfway down the street.

'Always living my life at 110%' he called back.

'Can't slow down,' his eyes were focused wherever he was waddling.

Hey that's too many percentages I wanted to shout to him; he'd already turned the corner. I kind of wish I'd said something, wish that he'd found it funny.