

Disconnect

Henrietta worried being herself was wrong and lived her life in denial of who she was. She felt disconnected from other people. She would rather watch videos (she preferred limited series, short with clear plots) than fabricate small talk. She loved her family and friends but felt distant—separate—apart. She was not anti-social—just not social. She enjoyed being by herself.

Being herself felt wrong.

She needed to change. To be someone else, someone comfortable with people. She found someone, married, had two children and loved them—she did—but she still savoured the afternoons her partner took the kids to the park, watching a film downstairs at night while everyone slept, reading a book alone.

Being herself still felt wrong.

Now in her seventies, Henreitta fell asleep watching her grandchildren play. Wrong. She smiled during family dinners—them leaving was the desert. Wrong. She should be engaged. These were people she loved and liked—but her only fun was playing cards, with limited conversations (she loved Hearts, where everyone has a temporary partner but is always alone.)

Henreitta was like the rest of us, guilt hanging over us like shrouds, for being us. We are Henrietta, denying ourselves because others believe we should. Why live in the gray because of what others believe? We are animals—social animals. She did her best to be part of the flock. Her favourite memory was apartment 1½. A tiny abode with a tiny living room facing a downtown street, the kitchen dominated by a water heater next to the fridge and stove. The tiny washroom had a half- sized tub—she could sit on the potty and wash her feet in the tub. Henreitta would work, come home, eat a TV dinner while sitting on