

A Harsh Pep Talk

by Joey Delgado

You are nothing but a generic white man with average looks and intelligence, trapped in an indie romantic comedy. You sit in your overstuffed coffeeshop chair, drinking an impossibly befoamed cappuccino, the sleeves of your flannel rolled up to your elbows, mellow synth beats oozing from your headphones, a Spotify playlist you found by typing 'Hipster EDM' into a search bar. I could just fucking slap you. All your choices are made based on a chance hypothetical encounter with an effortlessly trendy twenty-something who carries business cards that say 'INFLUENCER'. Let me tell you something, I'd have more respect for you if you were listening to what you really wanted to listen to, the ladies from *VH1s Divas Live*. More importantly, you'd respect yourself. There's nothing wrong with a Carole King/Shania Twain duet. Look, I don't mean to pick on you, but no one buys such a calculated front. We are in an age where no one is anything because everyone is everything. The time and energy you invest in making yourself into a 'type' is slowly draining your soul, your authenticity, and just when you think you've made the final tweak on your now-perfect image, this world of everything and nothing will crack you upside your self-satisfied head and scream in your face until you realize you are so far away from where you wanted to be at the age of [enter the age that terrifies you the most]. Somewhere, maybe on your nightstand, there is a moleskin notebook filled with resolutions, steps to what you would consider your perfect life. I can tell by the look on your face there is such a notebook. Hasn't there always been such a notebook? I want you to set fire to that fucking thing. I want you to hold it in your hand as it burns and wave it around your head like it's a bundle of dried sage. Walk through your apartment and wave this aspirational torch over all the bullshit you've acquired over the years, all the detritus you thought would make you into the person you hoped to be. Set yourself free from this chrysalis of consumerism. There will be no metamorphosis. You will not emerge an earth-toned,

Instagrammable butterfly. There will only be the husk of vinyl record sleeves, Roger Corman blu-rays, and used books of Bukowski poems with notes in the margins made by their former owners, not you. Am I telling you to just be yourself? No. 'Yourself' is what got you here in the first place. I'm telling you to be a more self-aware version of 'yourself.' It's not easy. Self-awareness is a fucking horror show. But self-awareness will let you be the Final Girl in your own horror show, the one left standing, bloodied and bruised and shrieking in terror. But you'd be alive. Okay, I'm done. Who am I? Considering you're a generic white man with average looks and intelligence in an indie romantic comedy, think of me as a world-weary drag queen with wisdom coming out my bleached asshole, whose sole-purpose is to be the catalyst for your new lease on life. Enjoy your cappuccino.

