



Hi there,

I don't like to shop online. Nothing fits quite right, I don't understand return shipping labels, I hate plastic packaging... I could go on.

It's not really an issue, since most of my clothes are thrifted or pilfered from a friend. But sometimes you need things like underwear and tank tops and socks, which is how I found myself at the Coral Square Mall, retail center of my childhood and my nightmares. It's similar enough to how I remember it. I buy a matcha latte from Starbucks; I wander around trying on sweatshop garbage. But something has changed recently, and I don't understand it: Why does EVERY store now ask for your email and phone number at checkout?

I was raised right; I don't give my cell number out to strangers willy-nilly, and I am definitely not going to give it to *Hollister* of all places. I don't want your marketing messages. I don't want to be added to your list. I am trying to give you money, and that should be enough.

So you can imagine my disdain when the cashier at Victoria's Secret informed me: "**All customers have to provide a phone number.**" The interaction went something like this:

Me: Is it okay if I don't give one?

Cashier: ...Do you not have a phone number?

Me: I do. I'm just not going to give it to you.

[A painful few seconds go by. I do a quick calculation: Am I willing to part with the \$5/\$35 underwear I just picked out in order to protect the last shred of my privacy? Yes, I decide. I am.]

Cashier: Okay. I just made up a fake number. Can I have your email?

Me: Come on, dude.

LET'S CONSUME MEDIA

Books

Wow did I read a lot in the last two months. Here we go!

- ***Miami*** by Joan Didion. As a South Floridian who can count on one hand how many times I've been to Miami, this book served as a useful guide. I don't think it's Didion's strongest, but man, can she whittle a scene down to its essential bones: "A tropical entropy ensues..."
- ***The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue*** by V. E. Schwab. I read this book in one day on the Croatian coastline. It did not live up to the hype. I'm usually the first to suspend my belief about things, letting the rules of magical realism slide a bit... but what was up with the love interest? Did he even have a physical form? And why was the *other* love interest so bland and uselessly emotional about everything? There were so many loopholes in her curse I couldn't keep track of them all. Meh.
- ***The Stone Sky*** by NK Jemisin So long to the broken earth trilogy. This was a great read, but I can't help but feel like the ending was rushed. But the details in which Jemisin describes the physical world were wonderful. A+ immersion!
- ***Having and Being Had*** by Eula Biss. This book felt like splashing cold water on your face at the end of a long, hot day. All her points on biking, capitalism, work, love, family, obligation.... Yes. I bought her other books immediately.
- ***Dog Flowers*** by Danielle Geller. Not immune from Floridian memoirs, even when they're bad. I like the stories she told though, even when the writing left a lot to be desired.
- ***Desperate Characters*** by Paula Fox. A great little read, something I wish I had read in a classroom or book club setting, because there was so much to pick apart. 5/5!

These are called "pieces" for some reason!

- **"The Gothic Fantasies of Beatrice Sparks."** I'm one of the dummies who thought Go Ask Alice was real.

- [“Meet the Lobbyist Next Door”](#) What do a Real Housewife, an Olympic athlete, and a doula have in common? They’re all being paid by an ad-tech startup as influencers—peddling not products but ideologies.
- This [audiologist Q&A video](#) was strangely enthralling.

Music

- [listen to my Y2K playlist. I hope it evokes feelings of watching Jackass after school, getting high for the first time with your friend’s older brother, CGI deserts in MTV music videos, bald men going through their first divorce, etc.](#)

It's been a year of Cracked Up!

Are you enjoying what you're reading? Do you like the new design? Do you miss all my COVID jokes? Is this email still finding its way to your spam folder? Let me know! (Really, you can reply to this email).

Happy Anniversary to us!

Rachel