



Letter To Me: Seeta

CIARA & KARI INNER CIRCLE • JULY 15, 2019



Hey, Eighteen-Year-Old Me,

I know you. Rather, I know us because I've already been where you are, where we were. We're 40 now, and I know that seems unimaginable because you thought our life would be fulfilled by 30. You even questioned if we'd live this long. Let's be real though: You used to say that because you thought it made you sound cool. Sadly, I'm not sure we'll ever grow out of that farce.

You seem surprised I'm calling our bluff. Of course, we know now and knew then we said shit to be aloof. But knowing it is, strangely, a good thing. It means we've grown. That thing—self-awareness—is going to save us.

This life we share . . . it doesn't go how you think it's going to go. What you're planning is a perfect life as a rich celebrity living in a condo overlooking Lake Michigan in downtown Chicago, and you're convinced you're going to marry a baseball player or a professional wrestler. We aren't going to do any of that. I'd say I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not.

I can see you hiding an anxiety attack under rolled eyes and a lot of swearing. I see you internally cringing at the word "disappointment." You're hiding your vulnerability, and that's OK. Your toughness is something we'll always need even when it's fake. Still, I call that bluff. You're going to spend a lot of time with the word "disappointment," and I know deep down that scares the fuck out of you. Keep rolling your eyes because I know you don't believe me. That skepticism will help us function. In truth, the moment we start prizing blind love over that overanxious, questioning voice in our head is when shit goes wrong.

Let me back up. See, what you're doing right now, eighteen-year-old me, is wanting desperately for everyone to like you. To make that happen, you are convinced you must be someone you aren't because the cool kids treat you like trash. You're too brown, too fat, too poor, and too weird. You don't listen to Led Zeppelin, you don't get drunk on weekends, and you can't afford to shop at The

CART (0)

at Red Roof Inn every time you travel, and that place doesn't even have a pool. Shitty, right?

Not really. Back up. Did you see that bit about travel? I wish I could make you appreciate it so much more. I want to find a way to get you to look around and love the simple things. You're going to see so much, and you'll forget far too much of it. You'll see the World Trade Center, and you won't even remember it, and I can't tell you how much that matters. You'll be too wrapped up in trying to simultaneously be different and wanting to fit in, and you won't take the time to appreciate what you have rather than asking yourself why you want to fit in with a bunch of drunk, spoiled, racist assholes. You don't even like them, and they are not the arbiters of cool no matter what MTV tells you. Hell, MTV won't be relevant by the time you hit 30, and neither will those assholes at school.

But because of them and the silly so-called rules of society, I know you hold fast to your hatred for pink and girly things because girly equals uncool, right? I know you think romance novels are lame. I know you like wrestling and baseball because, well, boys. And all the coolest kids at school are boys.

Guess what? Boys are overrated.

Don't get me wrong. You'll fall in love. You'll meet the wrong boys a lot. But then you'll meet the right man (and he'll be tall and awesome). But you're also going to own several skirts you love, buy a pink shirt, be embarrassed to admit you ever liked wrestling, and write a romance novel. You'll do this because you'll realize you've been hiding a strong woman inside, and you'll let her out. You'll come to learn this world treats strong women and the things we love like dirt. You'll learn the world props up mediocre boys and hates strong women.

You'll do this because you'll realize you've been hiding a strong woman inside, and you'll let her out.

That'll probably surprise you. I know you're like, "Wait. Is feminism cool again?" Well, surprises are what make life fun. Like your arm.

Yeah, that's weird, but you'll be riding in the car one day with your husband, and you'll have your arm out the window, and you'll notice your arm fat shaking in the wind. Instead of recoiling at the thought of still being fat, you'll like something about your body as it is. You'll get a kick out of the jiggle. You're going to be fat, and it's going to be OK despite what those boys, doctors, television shows, magazines, and total strangers told you. You're going to slowly learn to accept yourself. You won't get there all at once, and you're going to get impatient with it. You'll tell yourself every day when you're eating something supposedly bad for you that you don't care anymore. You'll feel guilty

CART (0)

your brain was different from everyone else's. *Pay attention to that.* You'll learn it was, and it'll be a relief when someone finally validates that. *Pay attention to the validation* because I have enough anger for both of us that it took so long. Someone should've told us sooner it was anxiety, and considering how we grew up, it was inevitable.

The whole time growing up you've known you should be yourself, but you couldn't do it because you weren't strong enough to handle the rejection. You weren't strong enough to handle the rejection because, frankly, our childhood was heavy. It's hard to accept life and yourself as-is when your life as-is makes no sense. You shouldn't have to deal with the things you've faced. You'll normalize it, but it's not nor was it ever normal.

Cope with it how you need to cope. If that's eating, do it. If that's hating pink, lean into it. You're doing the best you can. I am so sorry anyone ever made us feel differently.

This life is going to be painful, trying, and exhausting. You'll repeatedly ask, "Why does this keep happening to me?" Those assholes at school, the boys who called you "fat" and "ugly," the friends who weren't friends? Those are all the pains of rejection. That will never stop, and it won't get easier. It'll get much harder as you work your ass off toward your career goals only to be rejected by a version of one of the rich, mediocre boys in a 50-something year old man's body.

Yeah. You're right. That does suck. Yet it's what teaches us the most. We'll learn to not believe in regret, but instead to learn from the mistakes. Sure, maybe drinking a McDonald's banana milkshake a day throughout the month of September of junior year wasn't the best choice. Yeah, it's OK to admit we knew that when it was happening. Maybe when Mom comments we've gained weight, we might want to acknowledge it was the quarter pounders and the banana milkshakes. That doesn't mean we regret anything or that Mom is being as mean as those boys. We're going to always love food. We're going to learn to accept our love for food. We're going to learn to build a career around food.

We might not have a milkshake a day though. Just sayin'.

Before I go, I want to say a few quick things. Spoilers, I guess. You're going to love learning to set boundaries. You'll develop a close relationship with your father (yeah, I still don't believe it). Your feet are going to get bigger, but you won't get any taller; you're a goddamn scientific mystery. You're going to learn to love, accept, contradict, and simply be. Despite what you believe now, you will learn to be yourself, and not only will you be desirable, but you'll be desirable to yourself. All that passion you've stored up and hid from the cool kids? You'll turn it inward.

CART (0)

through it, you might think, “You coulda warned me!” But at some point, you’re going to realize regret is a pointless feeling. You need to experience the love and the heartbreak to understand your worth isn’t measured by a boy or a man loving you. You need to learn the hard way disappointing others doesn’t make you lesser. You need every moment. It’s not my job to protect you from the life you’re about to live. It’s my job to encourage you to live it.



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POST COMMENT...

**Tyesha** 8 months ago · 0 Likes

I love this. “Feet got bigger, but didn’t get taller... scientific mystery!”! Haha I was telling kids that I used to nanny that I followed all “eat carrots or you’ll need glasses” rules and low and behold - I have glasses. But honestly, I wish I could hug my 18 year old self.

**Stephanie** 8 months ago · 0 Likes

CART (0)

For sharing :)
-stevie



Shannan Belden 8 months ago · 0 Likes

I'm not crying, you're crying! How did I miss banana milkshakes?



Tracy Carlson 8 months ago · 0 Likes

I LOVE this.

PREVIOUS

NEXT

hear of new products, exciting
updates + more first!



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