DISGUISED COERCION

THE POST-ROLE AUTOPSY



When we tie our worth to a job title, we often unknowingly adopt external expectations as our own. This is disguised coercion; the expectation doesn't feel like pressure; it feels like choice. We often apply this pressure to the roles we take in our professional lives. CEO, Principal, and Founder are powerful-sounding titles that can lead to a slide toward self-indulgence.

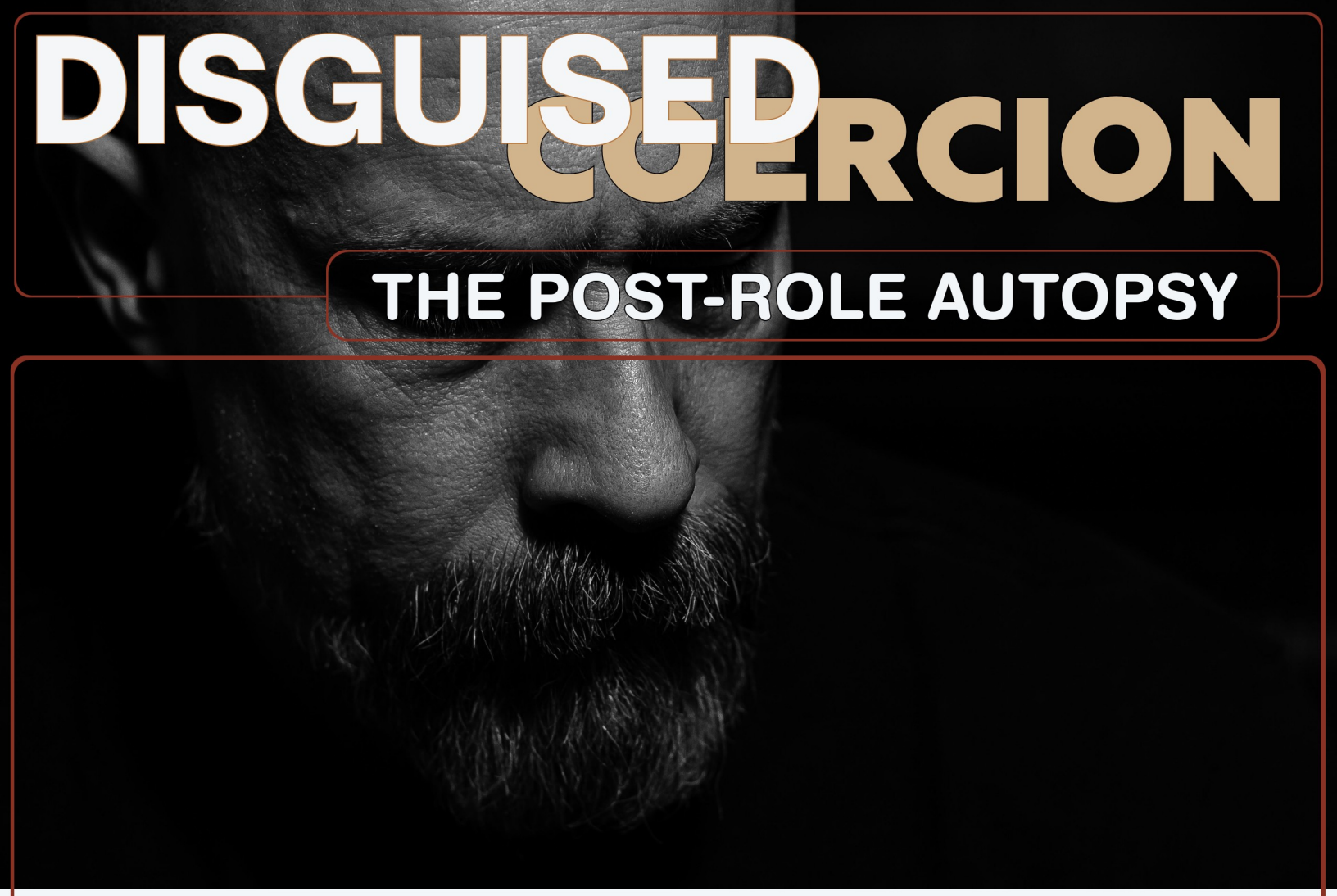
This downloadable document offers a tracking and reflection exercise—The Post-Role Autopsy—to help identify and combat this coercion.

The Post-Role Autopsy is a specific, structured exercise designed to help you separate your core identity from your professional function and avoid the coercion trap.

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The Exercise

Objective: To visualize your life after you no longer hold your current title, revealing what parts of your identity are truly yours and which are performative artifacts of the role.
Time Required: 20–30 minutes
Tools: A blank document or journal and a timer.

Step 1: Resignation Visualization

Close your eyes and imagine yourself voluntarily leaving your job, effective immediately. You have no plan to replace it. You are not retiring; you are merely unemployed in the traditional sense.

- Feel the initial drop in status.
- Notice the physical sensation of the title vanishing from your introduction, your email signature, and your business card.
- Acknowledge the anxiety. This anxiety is often the “status anxiety” you are trying to combat.

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Step 2: A Three-Column Audit

Open your journal and create three columns. Label them:

1. **The Role's Props**
2. **The Role's Script**
3. **The Core Self**

Spend 10 minutes filling them out based on the visualization in Step 1.

The Role's Props	The Role's Script	The Core Self
Things I only do/have because of the title.	Things I say or believe because the role demands it.	Things I would still do or believe without the title.
For Example: Attend specific networking events. Drive a certain car to signal success. Adhere to a specific dress code.	**For Example:** "I'm so busy" as a status badge. Agreeing with industry trends I privately doubt. Measuring self-worth by quarterly targets.	**For Example:** Read Wittgenstein or Sartre on Sunday mornings. Help a neighbor fix a fence. The way I laugh at a specific type of joke.

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Step 3: Do a Coercion Scan

Review the first two columns (Props and Script). These are the areas where disguised coercion is likely operating. Ask yourself:

- "If I stopped doing this tomorrow, would anyone actually notice or care?"
- "Am I doing this because I enjoy it, or because the role expects me to?"
- "Is this a choice I made, or a script I inherited?"

Identify the top 2 items in these columns that feel the most "coerced." These are your primary targets for de-identification.

Step 4: The Re-Introduction Draft

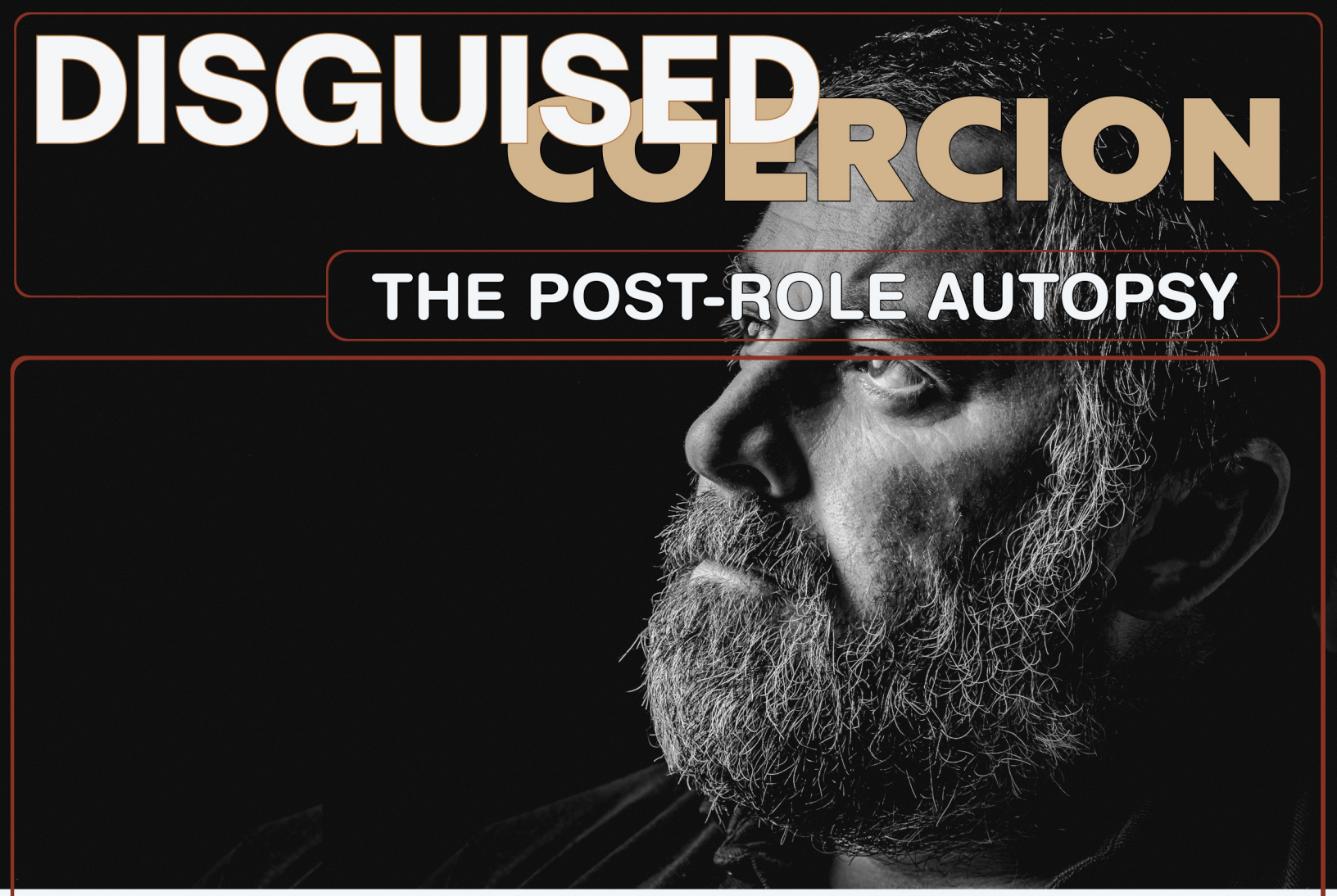
Write a new introduction for yourself, as if you are meeting someone at a coffee shop, without mentioning your job title or industry.

- Constraint: You cannot use your job, your company, or your industry to define you.
- Focus: Describe your values, your current projects (hobbies, learning, community), and what you are curious about.
- Example: Instead of "I'm a VP of Marketing," try "I'm currently obsessed with understanding how urban design affects community connection, and I spend my weekends sketching city layouts."

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Step 5: A 48-Hour Micro-Experiment

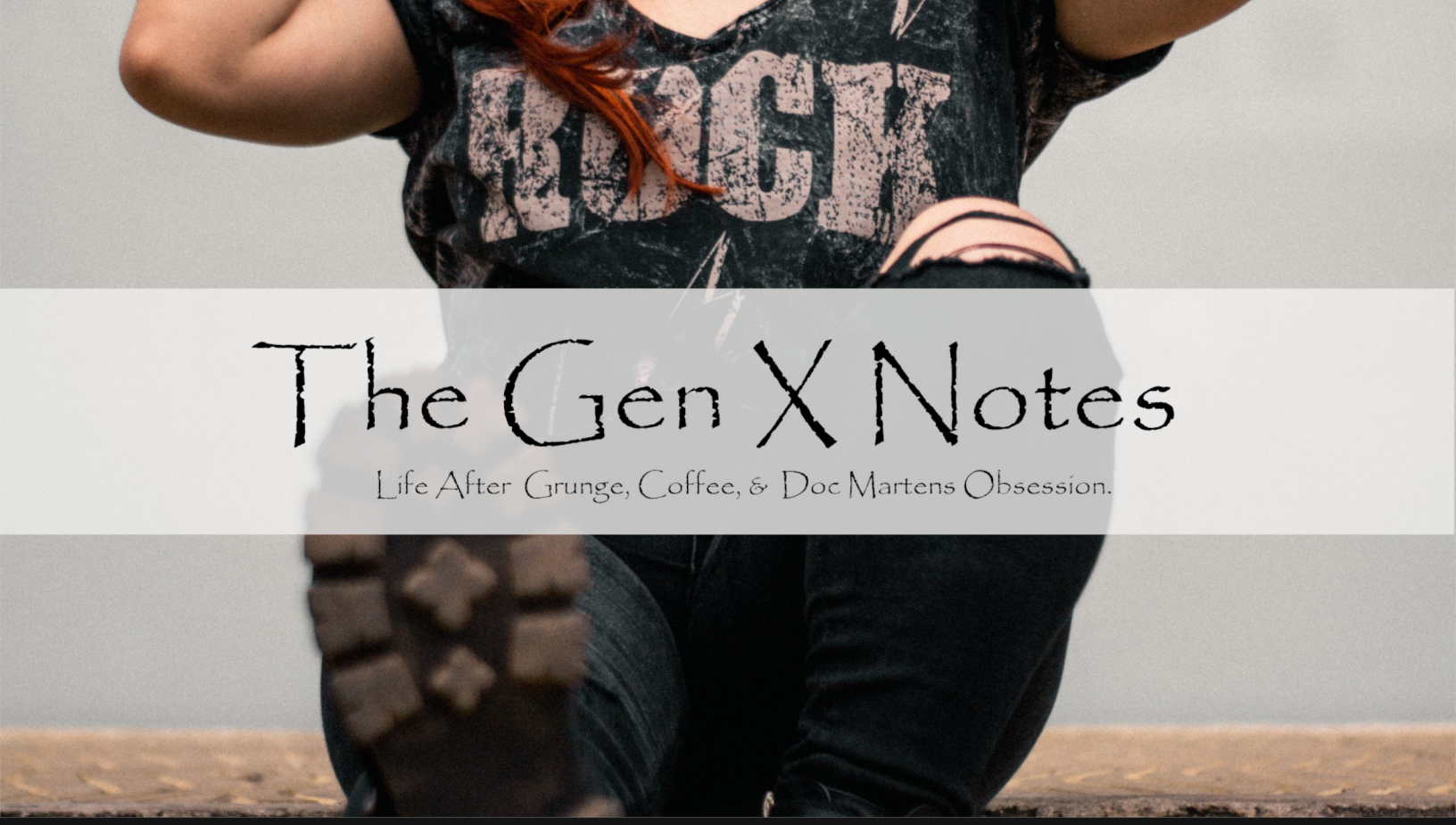
Choose one small action from your “Core Self” column (Step 2) that you usually suppress because it doesn’t fit your professional image.

- **The Task:** Do this action within the next 48 hours.
- **The Goal:** Notice the feeling of doing it without the professional justification. How does it feel? Does it feel “lighter”? Does it feel like you?

Why It Works

This exercise seeks a distinction between instrumental identity—who you are to get a result—and intrinsic identity, i.e., who you are when no one is watching. By explicitly naming the “Props” and “Scripts,” you strip them of their power to coerce you. You move from “I am a [Whatever Title]” to “I do [Whatever Title] tasks, but I am [Core Self].”

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The Gen X Notes

Life After Grunge, Coffee, & Doc Martens Obsession.

THANK YOU



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