

trans girl
suicide museum

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III

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for Hazel

contents

disclaimers

pt. i, symbols
early spring 2017

pt. ii, ketamine princess
late fall 2017

pt ii.5
what helped me

pt. iii
trans girl suicide museum 1: cartesian dysphoria
(can't remember when I wrote this)

pt. iv
Miami (a few days before Christmas 2017)

pt. v
trans girl suicide museum 2: just hanging out in the
museum, january 14 2018

pt. vi
how to get asked your pronouns (suicide museum
underwear drawer guided tour)

pt. vii
trans girl suicide museum 3: hall of mothers

pt. viii
trans girl suicide museum 4: humiliation (early spring '18)

pt. ix
trans girl suicide museum 5: neutral zone (late spring '18)

pt. x
tgsm 1000: the suicide museum refers to a specific
transness, and that transness has a specific shape

afterword

references / works mentioned

disclaimers

1. What follows contains discussion of suicide, sex, death, drug use, sexual harassment, and transphobia at length.

2. My parents had fancy jobs (doctor and professor, solidly in the five percent of the wealthiest U.S. families) and I grew up with a lot of class privilege, including graduating debt-free from an ivy league school where one my parents had tenure. So in some ways, I have little in common with many other trans people, because compared to most people in the world and even in this country, I am rich. A lot of people who are as rich as my family (e.g. “upper middle class”) seem to be confused about this and don’t refer to themselves as “rich,” which I think is both evasive and also delusional. In particular, I think this evasion makes upper-middle-class-flavor rich people experience the delusion that class oppression (and injustice and poverty etc.) isn’t their responsibility, when actually it is.

It can be really uncomfortable to talk about this – so uncomfortable in fact that most rich white people make art and say it’s about ideas, or the human condition, when usually their art is also—and maybe mostly—about being rich and white. So I don’t want anyone to read this and think that it was written by a universal trans girl (which doesn’t exist) when in fact it was written by a trans girl who doesn’t really experience the disempowerment of class oppression &/or racial oppression—and therein the specific ways that transphobia, transmisogyny, racism, and class oppression intersect. In that way this text is about richness and whiteness in addition to whatever else it’s about. If for whatever reason you don’t have an appetite for another artifact of wealthy white subjectivity, feel free to put this book down.

I also have a critique of identity politics or am working on one, which is a way of saying that I am hesitant to use identity categories as my primary tools for decoding all of reality. Or in other words, I don’t actually feel that whiteness and wealth are the single most important things that are true about me. At the same time, I think that in order to get to a place—in our identities, and in our relationships, and in culture—where we can move past shallow or over-reliant ways of doing identity politics, people like me need to stop being evasive and delusional about our stuff.

3. I had a hope that a lot of different people would be able to read this book and feel like they basically understood what I'm talking about. Towards that goal, certain other writings that I refer to directly are included in a reference section. If you see a "***" in the text, it means you can go to the "references" at the end and see where the thing comes from.

4. I wrote a lot of this when I was thinking about certain things for the first time. The part of me that's perfectionistic wants to hide all of this beginner thinking, wants to present myself as fully formed and, well, perfected. I think especially for activists, women, and in a different but overlapping way for trans people, it can feel really shameful to be in one place in your process, and then change and be in a different place. Some of the things I wrote about below, I feel differently about now, or just more relaxed about. But I also think beginner thinking can be helpful for people to see, especially young people and trans people who are beginning, and that's partly why this book is this way.

5. A lot of people in capitalism make art and want it to be "good." I didn't write or make art in public for a long time because I think this idea of good and bad art is weird. I think it's weird to appraise or evaluate people's self-expression, to say that some people have a good or bad creativity or interiority. Accordingly, I did not try to make this book "good," and if that's what you're into, it might annoy you. I did, however, want it to be helpful to trans femme people and their friends, and I hope that it is.

pt. i, symbols: early spring 2017

I have this urge to text Lily and tell her that I have a crush on her. I have this urge to text Lily and tell her that even if she doesn't want to ever hang out with me, is it OK if I write her love letters? I have this urge to send her these love letters where I describe what my imaginative life with her is like, late night drives, sharing coconut La Croix with half a tab of acid in it and walking through the city at dawn, making out on the steps of a stranger's house, lots of eye contact during sex, a mutual insistence on a low-key relationship that feels unusually intense when we're together but then spans days or even weeks with silence and confusion, mutual obsession and moments of forgetting, making out with other people and thinking about the other, laughing about how i'm a late 20s trans girl and she's an early 20s business school student, buckets of alcohol, hours of oral sex, me talking to her about my transition.

Once I start hormones I don't know if my penis will ever get hard again. People have said things to me like "you just don't know" and "you can do it, it's just more work" but people also say things like "your penis and testicles will atrophy substantially" and "it just depends on how important erections are for your sex." I'm really not sure how important are erections for my sex. Most people who've had sex with me thought I was a man. Last week I had sex with someone, Jeannie, who I met on the internet. She wanted me to dom her and neither of us could host (i live in a basement and there's no door between my room and rest of my house) so we met in a hotel room. Before we met up I asked her via text how much small talk she wanted to have before hand, and told her it was a fantasy of mine to meet someone and just fuck them immediately, no introduction. Jeannie assented to this via text, and pressed her mouth into my mouth as soon as she walked into the hotel room. A few minutes later she was lying on her back on the bed with her head over the edge, and I was standing, fucking her throat (something she told me was her number one turn-on when we were texting) and fingering her. This isn't a way of having sex that has a particular appeal to me, but in this moment, my erection seemed pretty important. People say transgirls can take boner pills. Jeannie thought I was a man, and when I went to fuck her in the hotel room, I knew, in a way, that she was the last person I was ever going to fuck who had this deep misperception of me.

I want Lily to desire me even if my body becomes less and less like a man's body. I recently read an *Everyday Feminism* article that seemed to be criticizing the phenomenon whereby people have "genital preferences" for their sexual partners. Specifically the article was saying that it was transphobic if you were a cis lesbian who didn't want to fuck a trans girl.** It was by a trans woman who doesn't actually say outright, "cis lesbians not wanting to sleep with chicks with dicks is transphobic" but instead was instead cataloging *why* different responses (perhaps culled from YouTube comments?) to her critiques of "genital preferences" (code for 'not wanting to sleep with traps') were "problematic" (which is code for *very wrong*). Sorry if that last sentence is confusing; the whole thing was confusing for me.

I don't want to mock this person, but I did not like her article. Her general concern seemed to be that some people don't want to have sex with trans people, and her solution to that was to fashion a critique of that preference. Cyrus, who identified as a lesbian for a long time, used to say he would go on T but he was nervous about getting hairier or having his voice get deeper, but noted that he'd love to have a giant clit. So maybe I will think of my dick as a giant, floppy clit.

I don't want Lily to think it's problematic not to want to sleep with me. I don't want to feel rejected that a hot cis person doesn't want me and then make a critique of it to make myself feel better. I just want to lick Lily's vagina and asshole and put my hands inside her, and have her lick my vagina / asshole and put her hands inside me. I assume Lily is straight (I seriously barely know her) and I wonder if she'd still have texted me those different times at 10 PM asking what I was doing if she knew my dick was going to be like old chewed up gum soon, if she knew I was going to have a big floppy clit.

I lived in New York for a few years after college and then got kind of emotionally sick and had to leave. When I lived there I went on a rant once to Elizabeth about symbols. One day, fairly early on in our early romantic thing, we were in bed late at night and I was talking about not wanting to be a symbol to her. I knew from having other rich friends in New York who were invested in sub-culture and coolness that we would often describe people by describing them in symbolic categories, for example what their job was or where they went to college, rather than how they actually are in the world. Like imagine

a starter pack meme, seeing the whole world like that. I had a some spiritual social justice mentorship around believing that seeing people in this way was wrong, and so I believed it was wrong too. I said to Elizabeth, "I don't think of you as a hipstery art girl who lives in Bushwick, I think about what you're actually like." And I did, or I tried to anyways, I thought about her relationships with her friends and her parents, what she thought was funny and how she communicated, and how she liked to have sex, and what was off-putting to her and what she really wanted.

I also think in that moment I was being a little bit like the *Everyday Feminism* article author and feeling like it was Bad and Hurtful and Part of Capitalism for people to be invested in the symbolism of another person. I had a critique of one way people do things but the critique was actually partly coming from my pain. So with this relationship, I think I struggled, because I did recognize and make meaning out of the symbols represented by Elizabeth, that her family was rich and she had extra money to spend on clothes, and she recognized that I had fancy clothes too, and that she liked my clothes and I liked hers and we would take them off of each other and have sex with each others' pale bodies. These were part of how I experienced her and part of why we felt close to each other. Then I would also get stressed about us being too fancy, and not wanting to have that life, and I would put my stress about it on her in different ways. The critique was coming from my pain, as well as my beliefs.

I really wanted to resist seeing everything as a starter pack meme, a bundle of symbols, and I still do, to some extent. Like if someone tells me I should meet their friend, and then says that their friend is a kind of instagram-famous DJ from Greece who loves ketamine, I have trained myself to instinctively respond, even if just to myself "this is not really meaningful information about the person, except in a shallow capitalist way. I do not know if I would like them because I do not know if they are generous. I do not know if they are douche-y. I do not know if they are a grounded-and-actually-chill kind of person who ends up partying all the time. I do not know if they are addicted to visibility in a narcissistic way and if so whether I would be able to muster enough compassion around whatever their pain was in order to see them as a sympathetic character even though they might just be also really just adolescent and narcissistic and not that much fun on some deep level," etc.