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PROBLEM IS YOU

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Suicide Note 2015

It's that time again. Because it could be that time again. And this always needs revising. Things change; new people have betrayed me, I love new people, I've betrayed new people. But a suicide note should traditionally always be about self hatred or aloof disenchantment with the experience of living.. Those people that write bitter blameful suicide notes don't deserve the back-flip out of existence that suicide so beautifully offers us all.

In this iteration, I could for example, send out a fuck you to my ex wife in Vancouver Erin Templeton who never visited me in rehab and then kept the few objects that were precious to me ransom for three years hoping that one day I would twist myself into a gargoyle of apology that suited her own permanently scorned, emotionally static childlike blamelessness. But that's not my style.

Love and money. In the last year I came to know a love I did not know existed. Unconditional. What you hear about in Helen Hunt movies. I met a woman, Lazara, who accepted me for who I was, who did not wish to change anything about me, and who let me be myself, which is not always a pleasant thing to endure. I have spent my life pretending I could change for people. I cannot change. Now the experience of being accepted as I truly am has opened up the world to me in a way I didn't imagine possible. It's truly beautiful. But that doesn't mean I can continue to endure the world that she helped me expand. My being allowed to be myself is in some ways truly frightening. I always resented being asked to change this or that, but I also assumed those requests were fair, because I saw myself as a monstrous burden to those who loved me. That this woman, like some precious angel, is able to carry that weight - this in itself could

be contorted, in the right mental state, as a new and different reason to end my life, because how could I let someone so brave and so kind endure so very much? Because I am far too much. I can barely lift my head, how she can carry all of me is unthinkable. I love this woman so much that it would just be another example of my own selfishness to let her take the blows my personality and instincts unknowingly reign down on her psyche, even if she is, of now, unaware of the assault.

2007 I had a solo show at Liste in Basel with a gallery in Switzerland I was working with. At the time I was with my aforementioned ex wife. I had had a very depressing year. Like the one before, like the one after, like this one, like the year of my birth. Being not that bright, I worked very hard on making the best paintings I could, and assumed that if this show went well, then the sun would shine down on me and my problems would be vanquished. Because I was naive then, at 33 I was painfully naive still. Hours before the fair even opened, my dealers told me that the esteemed Hauser and Wirth Gallery had bought my entire show. While other dealers were putting nails in the wall, my dealers put their feet on the desk. They called me ex wife and I into the booth and told me the news. I made something like seventy thousand Euros in fifteen minutes for a year's worth of work. My ex wife beamed, my dealers beamed. I stood there like a man who had just been hung but the rope broke. I had no words. I went to the lounge and ordered a drink, my wife followed me, we went downstairs, and I buried my face in her breast and wept like an insane person. Because nothing had changed. I felt no better. I felt no accomplishment. I felt no pride or relief. What I felt was a terrifying sameness. And in that moment, I realized that art was not the thing that would fill the hole in me. And money was not it either. All the money did was give me more money to fill my body with drugs and alcohol. Which I did promptly, for three years and change, having shows here and there where my work suffered, until I ended up living with a psychopath and a single father, drinking every waking hour and wandering skid row puking on my shoes and scoring dope.

In 2012 I went to rehab. I was 38. I was naive at 38 in that I thought if I stopped being a drug addict and an alcoholic, I would feel better. I spent three months there and nine in a halfway house and moved back to Toronto to be near my family. It was a slow motion re-enactment of my sold out show five years before. I took the drugs and the alcohol away, and I felt no better. I just experienced the reality of my mind soberly. I had a minor nervous breakdown. What lives in me is a hole. I have spent my life trying to fill it. I don't know if I was born with this hole inside of me, or if it was carved or shot or eaten out by experience. But what I do know is that I've tried to fill it with everything imaginable. Sex shoplifting art women booze heroin marijuana television reading writing meditating basketball Percocet Jim Beam Ativan Budweiser Philip Roth BDSM. But the hole is insatiable. What it wants to be filled with is the end of me. I am emotionally self anthropophagous. I eat away at myself until there is nothing left. And I've done such a good job of it, that now, at 41, crawling into bed feels like crawling into a

foxhole, getting into the shower feels like moving a piano, and I've eaten away at the energy I need to continue.

Young people have faith in art. Some of them think it can make them money. It has become professionalized. Some of them will make money. I was one. But faith in something that the world doesn't need is a dangerous thing to stake your life on. I have been known primarily for making paintings. For this last show in Baltimore there are no paintings. Because my paintings aren't mine anymore, I make 'Brad Phillipsy' paintings. I make paintings that look like what I make, like what people have come to expect from me. I've started to making paintings the way people in pornography have sex. It looks real to the viewer, but there's no sincerity in the movement. Scenes stop and start again. Dicks go limp, people cry, lights burn out. And that is where I've ended up. A burned out starlet from a small town with dreams of moving from the adult film world to television then to movies, living in a trailer behind a car dealership in San Luis Obispo.

If I die before he does, Aaron Carpenter is to execute my wishes. Which are few. Give it all away to the dwindling number of people I haven't isolated. Apologize to everyone. Cut my arms and legs off and leave me in the forest.

Life is beautiful and this is true. But the greatest beauty in being alive is that we can stop the whole show in an instant if we choose to, and I'd rather exit now with some sense of empowerment than dwindle and shrink further into myself until my spine and my belly button kiss each other and I writhe on the ground like a sun bleached salamander.

I love everyone that ever touched me.

Brad Phillips, May 15, 2015