

NOTES

In recent years, a spotlight has illuminated one of our society's biggest, darkest secrets: The devastatingly painful depression and despair experienced by so many friends and loved ones living with mental illness. The severity of this problem has been given notoriety by the shocking number of celebrities, who, in recent decades, chose suicide as the self-proclaimed medicinal answer for their often untreated conditions. In her extraordinary literary debut, Adrianna Waters introduces us to Hazel, who, through a series of poignant letters, ultimately, though often in subliminal ways, asks a myriad of celebrities from all genres of the performing arts, the one question that will never truly be answered: Why suicide? And whether or not they were best known for dance, film, television, art, or writing, each "artist's" star may have shown brightly in the public eye, but in their private lives there was a darkness, a deep depression, they simply couldn't control. This selection may be performed by a male or female and may be entered in Prose Interpretation or Dramatic Interpretation. If used in Prose Interpretation, the drama mask icons are visible to simply show the performer when to turn the pages in the manuscript.

A letter to the poet:

Dear Sylvia Plath,

I finished reading *The Bell Jar* today. It was one of the most magnificent things I've ever read. You managed to craft this story about a girl named Ester, when Ester was really another version of you. There were too many stunning parallels between you and Ester to ignore it. This wasn't a novel; it was an autobiography. It's hard to believe no one saw your cry for help at the end. And maybe it wasn't really a cry for help, but I saw it that way. There was a hopeful change, a hope that Ester would be able to live her life with happiness. But that line about the bell jar, about not knowing whether or not it will trap you again—that line is proof that it doesn't get better for everyone. It was a warning of what was yet to come. The bell jar would descend over Ester, just as it descended over you.

I don't know why you stuck your head in an oven. It's such a painful way to die, and uncommon, too. I'm starting to think that's *why* you chose it. The spiraling insanity led you to the fiery furnace.

And that's why I'm really writing these letters. Because I've noticed an uncanny trend between artists and suicide, and I'm afraid that because I'm a painter, I will fall into that spiraling insanity, too.

Sincerely yours,

—Hazel



A letter to the dancer:

Dear Faith Bacon,

When I was in first grade, I decided I wanted to take ballet lessons, just like any other six-year old girl did. My mom bought me a pink leotard with matching tights, and she pulled my light brown hair up into a tight little bun. I walked in on my first day of ballet, eager to learn and do spins and leaps. Two classes later, I quit. I wasn't cut out for ballet. I realize now that I am probably the least flexible person on this earth, and that dancing in front of people is torturous.

But it wasn't like that for you. You appeared on Broadway and at the World's Fair. You used to be called "America's Most Beautiful Dancer." But then your career began to decline, and you were known as being difficult instead of beautiful. You had no money and were desperate to be in the spotlight again. And that's when you jumped out of your hotel room and died. I didn't realize people's opinions of you could change so quickly. That's the scary thing about being an artist, I guess. Art is not like math or science, because it's completely subjective. We live off of what people think of us.

Today I asked my counselor, Ms. Talbert, if I could fix my schedule for the second semester so I wasn't taking Art III. Her blue eyes got all muddled and she asked, "Well, aren't you enjoying Art II right now? Wouldn't you want to take the next level art class?"

And I told her, "Yes, I am enjoying the class, but I think it would be smarter to take a different class that would better equip me for the future—a future that doesn't include art."

And so Ms. Talbert switched me into Business Math, and I left my sketchbook at home for the third day in a row. The closest I came to drawing was the little doodles on my class notes during lectures.

I had always wanted to be an artist—ever since I was little. But that was before I found out my father died when I was two. He didn't die because of a freak car accident. He died because of a *suicidal* car accident. It was before I began noticing that artists are full of much more pain than their work will ever show. Faith, you were a dancer, and you jumped out of your hotel room. Sylvia Plath was a poet, and she stuck her head in an oven.

My father was a painter. They say that's where I got my interest in art.
Sincerely yours,
—Hazel



A letter to the singer:

Dear Kurt Cobain,

You're not supposed to speak ill of the dead, but, then again, I was never the biggest fan of Nirvana. They never hit me with emotion the way some music does, and I never found myself wanting to replay your songs over and over again. I didn't necessarily dislike you *or* Nirvana. I just didn't like you