



Suicide (French Literature Series)

By Edouard Levé



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Suicide cannot be read as simply another novel?it is, in a sense, the author's own oblique, public suicide note, a unique meditation on this most extreme of refusals. Presenting itself as an investigation into the suicide of a close friend?perhaps real, perhaps fictional?more than twenty years earlier, Levé gives us, little by little, a striking portrait of a man, with all his talents and flaws, who chose to reject his life, and all the people who loved him, in favor of oblivion. Gradually, through Levé's casually obsessive, pointillist, beautiful ruminations, we come to know a stoic, sensible, thoughtful man who bears more than a slight psychological resemblance to Levé himself. But *Suicide* is more than just a compendium of memories of an old friend; it is a near-exhaustive catalog of the ramifications and effects of the act of suicide, and a unique and melancholy farewell to life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The suicide of a childhood friend—addressed here as "you"—elicits a reflective and dignified expression of wondering and grief in this last work by artist and writer Levé (1965–2007), who finished this novel 10 days before killing himself. The narrator describes his friend as a solitary, taciturn character who smoked American cigarettes, studied economics, played the drums in rock bands, and kept largely to himself. Subtle, troubling details begin to emerge: feeling increasingly "ill adapted to the world," the friend stops traveling and obsesses over his own death, designing his own tomb and growing despondent, seized by a kind of resignation. In the end, having left the house with his wife to attend a tennis date, he returns by himself, heads to the basement, and blows his head off. Why did he do it? the author wonders. Leve's slender narrative possesses a near-clinical precision of detail, which functions as both a funeral oration and the chilling foretelling of his own death. (Apr.)

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Review

Suicide is not a fictionalized account of Levé's death; in some respects it is a negative image of it. 'You didn't leave any letters for loved ones to explain your death,' he writes, although Levé himself reportedly did. Levé's art and life nonetheless converge, fuse, and end brutally together. Ironically, *Suicide* represents a new departure for Levé: his previous books could be considered conceptual conceits, whereas *Suicide* is something else, a purely literary work. At the end of his life, Levé had by no means exhausted his art. (Hugo Wilcken - *The Berlin Review of Books*)

About the Author

Edouard Levé was born on January 1, 1965, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France. A writer, photographer, and visual artist, Levé was the author of four books of writing? *Works*, *Newspaper*, *Autoportrait*, and *Suicide*? and three books of photographs. *Suicide*, published in 2008, was his final book.

Jan Steyn is a South African translator from French and Afrikaans to English. He holds a degree in Comparative Literature from Emory University, and his translations include *Suicide* and *Works* by Edouard Levé.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bettie Hentges:

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