

The Bell Jar – Chapter 2

Lenny proves to be a very superficial but also self-confident character. As a DJ he listens to his tapes and loves listening to his own voice: “Nothing like listening to yourself talk.” (14)

Esther just remains an outside observer of the scene: “I sat cross-legged on one of the beds and tried to look devout and impassive [...] My drink was wet and depressing. [...] There is something demoralizing about watching two people get more and more crazy about each other, especially when you are the only extra person in the room.” (15)

Back at the hotel she is sober but looks horrible: “I noticed a big, smudgy-eyed Chinese woman [in the mirror] staring idiotically into my face. It was only me, of course. I was appalled to see how wrinkled and used-up I looked.” (17)

She feels depressed: “The silence depressed me. It wasn’t the silence of silence. It was my own silence.” (17)

She feels unable to connect with other people: “The china-white bedside telephone could have connected up with things, but there it sat, dumb as a death’s head.” (17)

Buddy Willard’s mother is introduced as someone who tries to decide on other people’s future: “she wanted me to marry Buddy,” (18) [...] she had even arranged for me to be given a job as a waitress at the TB sanatorium that summer so Buddy wouldn’t be lonely.” (18) Here for the first time it is made clear that according to Mrs Willard a woman is here to serve her husband.

A bath finally brings relief: “I felt pure and sweet as a new baby.” (19) Reluctantly only she is brought back to the New York reality by Doreen’s knocking at the door. (19)

After Doreen vomits Esther takes a decision: “I would watch her and listen to what she said, but deep down I would have nothing at all to do with her. Deep down, I would be loyal to Betsy and her innocent friends. It was Betsy I resembled at heart.” (21)