

September 5, 1899
(written from inside the asylum
by an inmate)

To Whomever Finds This,

I don't remember how long I've been here. Days? Months? Perhaps it's been years. Time doesn't move in this place-- it rots. They no longer know my name. Truthfully, I'm beginning to forget it, too.

They call me "the quiet one." But I was never quiet before I came here. Before the bars, before the bitter broth and bloodied sheets, I was someone's sister. I was someone's mother. I laughed. I danced. I lived.

And then I didn't.

They said I wept too much. I slept too little. Spoke too freely, Lived too deeply. The doctor called it hysteria. My husband called it shame.

Now, I lie in a bed that isn't mine. They no longer look at me. They look through me. Even the nurses avert their eyes when they find me soaked in filth or trembling with fever.

To them, I am already dead.

So, I write this for you, stranger. You who may read this long after my voice has left my body.

Please remember us. Not as madwomen. Not as burders. But as mothers. Sisters. Daughters. Women who felt too deeply in a world that demanded silence. We were not insane. We were unheard, and that, I think, was the greater crime.

Tell them.

Please. Tell someone we were here. Tell them we were not crazy.
