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## Out of Sight, Out of Mind: A Historical Fiction Detailing the Trauma of Mental Institutions in the mid 1940's

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Out of Sight, Out of Mind: A Historical Fiction Detailing the Trauma of Mental Institutions in  
the mid 1940's

Presented to the Department of History

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

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**Abstract**

*Out of Sight, Out of Mind* is a historical fiction that details the trauma of one character, Francie, when she is admitted to a mental institution against her will in mid-1940's America. Francie suffers from severe bipolar depression, which was poorly understood and had little treatments during this time. Different characters take turns narrating this piece, demonstrating how different perspectives can provide insight into the same circumstance. Francie's family must cope with complicated family relationships and mental illness throughout this narrative, which serves as the first segment of a future novel.

## Introduction

This thesis took me on a journey. It was a journey of self-discovery and a journey through time. This thesis enabled me to combine two of my passions, creative writing and medical history to form a thesis that wove both into a personal story. This story was cathartic for me in many ways as it allowed me to work through my frustrations with mental illness in my own family. I was also able to dive into history and explore a period of America where mental health was treated very differently than it is today. This thesis also serves the purpose of being “Part 1” of a novel I hope to complete.

In order to accurately paint a setting of another time, effectively describe the mental illness my character Francie suffers from, and detail the state of the mental institutions of the time, I had to compile research. This research began with *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Misreatment of the Mentally Ill* by Robert Whitaker. This book detailed the history of mental asylums and the treatment of the mentally ill. I utilized this book to get an overall picture of the time period and how mental illness fit, as well as some of the procedures and experiments that were developed during this time. I was also able to glean information on the state of America’s asylums. It was through this book that I learned that many asylums across America had poor funding, largely due to eugenics ideas of the time. I was inspired to write this in part by the story of Rosemary Kennedy and the frontal lobotomy that she endured. In order to get more information on her story, I read *Rosemary: The Hidden Kennedy Daughter* by Kate Clifford Larson. This enlightened me even further on the state of mental health during this time and also allowed me to fully understand Rosemary’s story. In my thesis, Willard takes Francie away from their home one night. This was inspired by Rosemary’s father taking her away, although it was much more tame in Rosemary’s reality than in my thesis.

I employed other resources to further my knowledge on mental illness and the different experiments completed on patients in mental institutions. These included *The Last Asylum* by Barbara Taylor to the “History of the Frontal Lobotomy in the United States, 1935-1955” by Anastasia Kucharski, M.D. These sources rounded out my understanding of how mental illness fit into this time period. In order to understand the time period beyond mental illness, I utilized *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War 1929-1945* by David M. Kennedy and *Grand Expectations: the United States, 1945-1974* by James Patterson. I also completed a couple of Google searches in order to answer small questions I had while writing, which included questions like, “What kind of candy was popular at the time?” and “what kind of clothes would the children and Lillian be wearing?” The year I spent writing this thesis was transformative for me. It allowed me to dig deeper into issues in my personal life, while also learning about another historical period and how mental illness fit within that period. My thesis was a perfect blend of the creative, the personal, and the scientific, and I am so thankful I had the opportunity to complete it.

*Part 1: Home is Where the Heart Is*  
*Milwaukee, WI*

\* \* \* FRANCIE- AUGUST 1947 \* \* \*

I should be happy.

The sun is so bright that it is setting drops of dew on fire in our front yard. *A new day.* I see sunlight hitting the house across the street, the last one built in our neighborhood. My mother tells me our home is the “product of the G.I bill” and we should be “so joyful and grateful to be in this suburb.” Instead, I feel like a soaked dishrag, laden with the burden of forgotten food, accidental spills and my mother’s sneeze while cleaning dishes last night.

I cannot move past the heaviness that surrounds me- a fog thicker than the August air that hangs along the lake in Milwaukee.

*Too bad you can’t just toss me in the wash like a dishrag,* I think as I retreat to my bed.

I hear the padding of socked feet coming down the hallway. Her little breaths float along with the dust I can see in the streams of sunlight through the window. A warm face presses up against mine. “Hey, Sissy.” She whispers, her breaths puffing lightly on my cheek. “You ready to get up? Momma’s made breakfast and I needa you to read me the cartoons.” I roll over and manage a fake smile. “Fine, but only if you tell Mom I seem happier today.”

“Mmmkay. Are you Sissy?”

She tilts her head to the side resembling a puppy.

“I never feel better Elsie, but you make me smile.” Her curls bounce slightly as her cheeks flush. Her eyes bore into mine. I shift roughly under the covers.

A moment later, she turns and skips toward the door. I watch creases ebb and flow on her chubby legs. She turns. "You comin' sissy? Come on." She grabs my thumb. I notice the little dimples at the root of her fingers as she pulls me downstairs to breakfast.

\* \* \* LILLIAN- AUGUST 1947 \* \* \*

I pour orange juice into six glasses and set them on the table. The daisies I picked this morning on my walk welcome my family to the table.

Without warning, I hear a rumble in the hallway.

My two boys appear in the doorway, Kenneth's head held in the crook of Edward's arm. Edward's eyes are light. They sparkle deviously as Kenneth lets out a small yelp, trying to punch his brother in the stomach. Edward's opted for his new "Norwegian style" shirt that I bought him with his school clothes this year while Kenneth is buttoned to the top in one of Willard's old work shirts, its loose folds hiding Kenneth's slim figure.

"Hey now. Cut it out. Sit down to eat. Where are your sisters?" I ask, as I adjust my apron.

I have laid out a spread of corned beef hash, toast, and poached eggs. A tower of pancakes graces the center of the table.

Edward strikes for toast and reaches it before I can grab his wrist.

"Stop that!" I exclaim, "We are waiting for your father."

My hands make wet imprints on my apron. I hear the giggle of my youngest as she enters the kitchen, holding Francie's thumb. Francie's gaze lifts for a moment, her green eyes predictably heavy. I've always wondered how she could make green eyes look so sad.

"Francie is happy today Momma! She told me so." Elsie says. "She's reading me the cartoons."

I look over my eldest daughter. Her hair, the darkest of the family, lays disheveled with a slight curl, frizzy along her part. Even still, it shines in the sunlight coming in through the window. Her lean body moves with what can only be described as a slow progression. Everything done with hesitancy, as if in one fell swoop, her entire world could crumble around her.

I sigh.

My focus shifts as I see a piece of white mush soar across the table. My eyes turn toward the boys. Kenneth quickly covers his face with his hands, his dirty blonde hair matching his brother's, who is staring at me defiantly. "Golly, Kenneth!" I exclaim, my eyebrows raised. "Mother, it was a rogue egg. There was nothing we could do. Kenneth tried to stop it, but the egg really had a mind of its own. Maybe it was fertilized by Rob Barker's rooster." Edward cackles, lightly punching the table as he glances at his sisters. I glance as well. Elsie giggles with her hands near her heart-shaped mouth. Francie's expression hasn't changed.

We hear heavy footsteps approaching the kitchen.

*Here comes Willard.*

My verses always calm me and, at this moment, I recall Psalm 127:3-5.

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies at the gate."

Except perhaps, when your enemy is your own husband.

"Ah, Lil, I see you've put on a spread. Are we celebrating?" Willard looks at me under thick eyebrows as he saunters into the kitchen.

"Well, I just thought, since this is your first morning home..." I start, but get cut off.

“I know you thought, Lil.” He settles into his chair.

“Boys, we didn’t have anything like this in the Philippines. The military rations were shit. I reckon you’re spoiled rotten.”

“We missed you, Father,” Kenneth begins hopefully.

“Have you started on your chores for the day?” Willard replies, not making eye contact with his son. Kenneth slouches in his seat.

Willard has been gone for nine months. He came home around dinner yesterday. He said hello to the children and climbed into bed. When I joined him in bed it was the first time we had slept next to each other in almost a year.

I turn toward the counter to grab the salt and pepper- I remember suddenly how Willard likes his hash.

I hastily place the salt and pepper on the table near his plate. He shakes the salt onto his hash distractedly and I cringe as a small pile of white starts to build.

“Daddio,” Elsie starts in a singsong voice, “I’ve been playing in the park with Billy Jane and I got a new doll last week. I also got bit by a spider!” She shudders, “it hurt bad.”

Willard ignores her. Heat rises in my cheeks. The clink of forks pierces the silence.

“Francie...” Willard breaks the silence. “Did you help out with the war effort while I was gone?” My heart starts to pick up the pace.

“For a short time, Father...” Francie hesitates.

“Lil, has Francie gone to school?”

Francie glances toward the floor.

“No...” I start and before I can finish Willard makes a noise of disgust.

“Francie you are nineteen-years old. When I was your age I was married and had a job at the steel factory,” he growls.

“Willard, you must still be on high alert from the war. Remember these are your children, not your enemies.” I say, my eyes drilling into his with the words I wanted to say but couldn’t. Without acknowledging my response, Willard cuts aggressively into his pancakes. His elbow catches the corner of the plate and it flips toward the floor. The oozing auburn runs as I turn to grab the dishrag from the sink.

\* \* \*ELSIE- AUGUST 1947 \* \* \*

Sissy is my favorite. She doesn’t know it, but I wake up sometimes when she comes to check on me in the nighttime. She brushes my hair back and it tickles my ear. One time, she read me a story about a dinosaur family. I giggled when Sissy said Daddy is like a T-Rex.

It makes me sad when she won’t get out of bed during the day so I always try to get her up. Momma told me she would play with me when I was a baby and sometimes carry me around the house. When I asked Momma why Sissy doesn’t want to go play with friends like I do, she tells me that Sissy is different. She says she is special. I wonder if she means special like the signs on the window shops in town that say, “Special! Sky Bars 5c!” I do love Sky Bars, but they don’t make me think of Sissy.

\* \* \*FRANCIE- AUGUST 1947 \* \* \*

I slip into a pool of warm, thick tar.

As I slowly sink into the thickness, it feels as though I am being wasted away. When my hips seep under, it feels my body is nothing but torso and has always been that way.

When it reaches my lungs, the pressure causes my lungs to collapse and I am unable to breathe. At my neck, I'm fairly positive I've never had a body to begin with. I am just a floating head ballooning under the pressure of a sea of darkness.

Suddenly, my head begins to slide under.

When I am completely submerged, the panic sets in. I try to kick my non-existent body and I open my mouth to scream. Ooze enters my mouth and the sulfuric taste burns my tongue.

I awake in a pool of sweat, my sheets twisted between my legs.

After these dreams, I pace. The whole house becomes my walking trail. Which, might I add, incites the panic of meeting the burglar I overheard Mother say robbed a store in town last week.

I never go into our cellar.

I will check on my siblings. Sometimes the house is so quiet I fear that everyone has stopped breathing and I am completely alone. Other times I curl into the corner of the kitchen and sob softly.

I don't even know why I am crying.

Tonight, I lie in bed, peering around my dark room. I can make out the small vanity my mom purchased me for my sixteenth birthday. I remember wishing I felt happy to receive it. I know she longed to see joyfulness or even gratefulness in my eyes. Unfortunately for her, I am made of darkness and fear.

And regret, but I hardly have the willpower to think about that.

I feel the stiffness of my sheets melt with my night sweat between my toes. I tuck my knees and cover my head. I want to close my eyes but that's only easy in the daytime. I wonder if death will be much different than this.

\* \* \* LILLIAN-AUGUST 1947 \* \* \*

Lying in bed next to Willard feels different. This is only the second night of Willard's return and I find myself wondering if I can lie here next to him for the next thirty years. I hear the slow rise and fall of his chest as his breath mingles with mine. It makes me wish it didn't and that my breath could somehow escape his. But this isn't new. When he left, the emptiness in my heart had already taken hold.

Willard spent many nights drinking before he left. I never complained. When he would come home and climb into bed with me, he would wake me with the slobbery kisses of a drunk. His whiskers would scratch my cheeks. There were nights when he would climb on top of me and I would hear him quietly whisper the name of another woman, his breath thick and hot; wafts of whiskey touching my skin.

Although our commitment to each other had withered away and it was hardly there to begin with, divorce was never an option. Divorce was unheard of.

Instead, we went our separate ways, the children caught in the middle.

This morning I wake earlier than Willard. I adjust the baby blue sheets that I bought while he was away. I unfasten the windows to let in the cool morning breeze. Willard moans at the sudden light and mumbles under his breath as I leave the room.

I stop at the boy's room. Their twin beds mirror one another on each side of the room. Two matching oak dressers, gifts from Willard's mother, mark the center. I quietly walk in, careful to avoid the creaks in the floorboards. Kenneth lies on his back with his mouth open and with one leg off the bed, snoring softly. Edward is turned into the wall, his sleeping shirt ruffled and pulled up his back. I stand silently for a moment, my eyes gracing the innocent curvatures of their bodies.

Then I retreat downstairs to go on my daily morning walk.

I met *him* on my walk five months ago. I was wearing one of my signature long skirts and he told me that the day he saw me, it was swaying in tune to the music of the wind through the trees.

Willard was away in the Philippines. I had been irrevocably lonely for far too long.

The day we met, I was walking under the large maple trees near our home and their leaves cast patterned shadows onto the ground. He had picked up pace to walk along beside me, and he startled me. But I soon learned to welcome his warm presence on my walks. That particular morning he had been visiting a friend who had recently returned from the War when he saw me walking.

His name was Robert Monroe. He was a research scientist at a university in the upper part of the state. Forty-one, his light hair was combed over to the right. Freckles covered his nose.

Our affair began innocently.

Robert gave me everything that I had always needed from Willard. He was kind and thoughtful. He answered me with wisdom when I opened up to him about our family's struggles. When he kissed me for the first time I felt an excitement I hadn't felt since I was a young girl. It wasn't until after I fell in love with Robert that I found out he was married. He misspoke one morning on our walk and gave himself away. I was heartbroken. Any possibility of freedom through Robert was dashed in one moment. Still, he consumed my thoughts and I knew I had married the wrong man.

\* \* \* ELSIE- NOVEMBER 1947 \* \* \*

Sissy had what Momma calls an “outburst” today. She burst into the room while I was playing with my doll on the living room floor. She looked angry and energized, kinda like the dog across the street when Kenneth’s ball goes over the fence. She was mad at Daddy and she screamed at him and called him lots of bad names.

He got off of the couch and hit her across the face.

Sissy yelled some more and knocked over one of Momma’s porcelain roses she has on the coffee table. It shattered on the floor near my feet and when Momma bent down to pick it up I saw she had tears rolling down her cheeks. Whenever I cry Momma tells me to be a big girl.

I still think Momma is a big girl.

\* \* \* LILLIAN- NOVEMBER 1947 \* \* \*

Francie and Willard never had a pleasant relationship. This isn’t to say that I don’t have fond memories of him taking her into town for a lollypop or letting her ride on his shoulders as we strode by the lakeshore when she was a child, despite the economic depression. Although Willard had lost his job, my father’s will had left us with enough money to survive. The children always had such light in those early years.

Except for Francie. It was in those early years when Francie and Willard’s relationship turned sour. Francie would run away from school and spend hours in the park alone before we found her. She always had trouble making friends with other children. Her outbursts and unwillingness to focus made her the unwilling center of her early academic years and not a favorite of her teachers.

Willard never had the patience for children, so the burden of Francie fell on me. Occasionally, he helped with the other children, but more often than not, he worked all day and

stayed out late. I met Willard at the pool the summer I turned seventeen. He struck up a conversation with me and it wasn't long before Willard was courting me. My pregnancy with Francie married us. I couldn't bear the thought of having a child out of wedlock. Willard and I went down to the courthouse and got married the day I told him I was pregnant.

After we married the true Willard emerged. His biting comments and silent treatments fractured us from the start. The funny thing is (I would never tell Willard), but there is so much of him in Francie. She shares his mercurial moods- joy one moment, quivering, bared teeth of a lion the next.

When Francie turned thirteen, her hysterics and puzzling listlessness heightened. Willard became a man void of empathy. Perhaps, he sees himself in her as well.

\* \* \* FRANCIE- DECEMBER 1947 \* \* \*

I have stolen one of my mother's needles from her sewing kit and I am repeatedly pricking my finger under the covers. I watch as my blood, crimson and thick, drips off my hand, staining the sheet in a growing flower.

I hear the latch of my door unclick as my father enters my room. He asks me "what in tarnation I am doing."

My legs curl up to my torso as a cold current of air sweeps on top of my body with the movement of the sheets. I tell him I don't feel good.

I hide my finger.

He says he doesn't care. He spits his tobacco chew and tells me I was am disgrace to the family and that my "reverse hysterics" need to quit or he will have to take me out back.

He grips the edge of the blanket and throws it off- taking the needle in its folds.

When he notices the bloodstains he looks at me with eyes that give him away.

He thinks I am a monster.

He leaves my room and heaviness overwhelms me. My heart shrivels and dies.

I roll over.

I can't pick my bed coverings off of the floor, so I shut my eyes.

My mother comes in shortly after and uses a dishrag to clean up the blood on my sheets.

As she wipes the dried blood off of my fingers I don't look at her. When she turns to wring the rag in a bucket of wash water she had brought with her, I watch as the stain became pink and light and then disappear.

*What a gift, to be able to disappear.*

My father comes back into my room once my mother had left and heads directly for my bed. I don't turn toward him. He sits hesitantly on the edge and reaches out to stroke my hair.

I flinch at this change in demeanor.

He whispers, "Francie, we will find something to do with you." He leaves the room, the door squeaking as he closes it behind him. His tone of his voice doubles me over. He sounds calm, determined. It is a tone that I have never heard him use with me.

\* \* \* LILLIAN- DECEMBER 1947 \* \* \*

This afternoon Willard stormed home for lunch. When he walked into the house, he was rigid and rippling with irritation. He works down the road at the steel factory and I usually pack him lunch in the mornings.

This morning, however, I found Francie curled into the fetal position and sobbing into a dampened pillow. She shook with each sob. I knelt at her bedside, hummed quietly, and rubbed her back. She beat her bed with clenched fists. She scratched one of her legs with her opposing toenail, casting red ribbons down her legs.

As I rubbed her back I repeated a verse from the Bible that has calmed me in life's most treacherous moments: "The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple." I glance down at her face, remembering the softness of her newborn skin – lamenting over the red desert that has taken its place.

Francie's dark days ebb and flow in no noticeable pattern. Some mornings I am too exhausted to deal with her. Sometimes, when Willard was away, I would get all of the children to school and then go lie in bed, pulling the covers up to cover my ears and muffle her wails.

Today, I linger with Francie. I tell myself that it is for her good and in many ways it is. But I also know that right now in the kitchen Willard has been forced to make his own sandwich.

\* \* \* ELSIE- DECEMBER 1947 \* \* \*

It's New Years Eve and I am feelin' good. Momma gave me one of Francie's old dresses to wear tonight and I am light as a feather. It is light blue with white curlicue ribbon along the bottom. When I twirl fast it floats out and I feel like an umbrella. My tummy spins with the warm meatloaf that Momma made tonight. Tomorrow, she will make sauerkraut. She told me that it is a tradition for German folk (that's what we are) to be lucky in the New Year. I've decided I'm gonna make Francie eat a lot of sauerkraut. Daddy gave Kenneth and Edward sparklers to light when the clock strikes twelve. I wanted one too but Momma said that they could light my hairs on fire and I don't want that.

Sissy sits in the corner of the living room, as far away from Daddy and me as she can. I don't know why Francie can't be happy even when the whole family is supposed to and we all

have nice clothes on. I went over and tried to snuggle up to her and she allowed me to lean on her shoulder but she didn't squeeze me in the way I like, the kind of squeeze that makes me feel like I could pop.

We have a big clock on the mantle that counts down the time and Momma put the radio on. She puts it on every night, but tonight is especially important, because it's almost 1948! Frank Sinatra plays and I sway a little bit. The radio cackles as it counts down from ten. Then it is the New Year! I look around the room. My brothers dash out back to light the sparklers and Momma runs after them, yelling something about putting their coats on. The door creaks opened and closed. Then it's just Daddy, Sissy and me. We sit quietly though I wiggle in my seat. The light makes the room look warm and happy. Sissy sits in the corner then suddenly gets up and retreats to her room. Daddy looks angry. He follows her to room. Muffled screams come through the door. I open the back door and watch the boys with their sparklers. They run circles around the yard. The sparklers look like big ole' fireflies in their hands. Momma stands on the porch with her arms crossed. Her eyes crinkle and I know she hears Sissy and Daddy too. I sit down next to her and wrap my arms around my knees. The cold night air gives me goosebumps. I shiver then I go back inside and make my way to the kitchen to get my blanket that I left on the floor.

Our kitchen floor is what Momma calls "linoleum" and it's light green and real fun to slide with my socks like I have skates on. I skate into the kitchen and I am surprised to see Sissy leaning over the sink. Some blood spreads on the dishrag she holds in her hand so I walk over to her. "Sissy?" I say, "You okay? She doesn't answer. I keep talking, "If Daddy says you gotta stop, maybe you should sto-" before I can finish I feel a hand whip across my face and it scorches my cheek. My eyes fill with tears as I grab my face. "Sissy!" I sob. She looks at me for

a second and I can't tell if she is sorry but I feel my heart gripping in my chest and I'm afraid of her. My Sissy.

I bite my lip and do a big sniffle because I can't breathe. I run out of the room slipping on my socks because skating isn't fun anymore.

\* \* \* FRANCIE- MAY 1947 \* \* \*

I am a corpse at the bottom of the ocean, a heavy current flowing over me, tangling me in seaweed.

So, I study the floral design on my pillows; feel the cloth under my cheek. I bite my nails. Patterns distract me, so I've always asked mother for patterned sheets and clothing. Once, mother bought me a sheet set that was covered in smiling doll faces. I let the blood from my period run all over it and ruin it one night. The taunting smiles needed to go.

*This night is so still.*

Not even the normal creak of the house structure mocks me tonight. So I stare at the ceiling.

Suddenly, the familiar crackle of tires on pebble startles me. I stiffen. Someone comes through the front door and walks clumsily through the kitchen, bumping into the table. I cannot breathe or move.

*It is probably father – I am used to him coming home late like this. Or is it the burglar? Or it could be the police because they found out I was pricking my fingers. My mother must have called the police on me. I KNEW that woman hated me.*

The footsteps come down the hallway in a thumping progression and my door opens with a squeak. My father enters my room, stumbles, and balances himself on my bed before ripping the covers off. He grabs my arm and pulls me from my bed. I can smell whiskey on his breath as I fall to my knees, sinking into the carpet I knew Mother was proud we had. "Shh," he

whispers too aggressively in my ear. He pulls me down the hallway and through the kitchen to the front door. My toes sink into the mud, residue from yesterday's thunderstorm. I'm too stunned to speak as he loads me into his 1940 Chevrolet truck that he has called "his baby" more times than all of his children combined. He gets in beside me. As we are pulling out, Mother appears in the open window, her bangs wisping over her face.

"What are you doing?!" she cries. "Willard!!!"

She disappears from the window and runs down the stairs. As she throws open the front door, my father swerves out of our drive. As we drive away, Her scream mingles with the creak of the house in the wind. Still, my father drives.

I curl softly into the seat, its ripped cloth assaulting me with its musk. He jerks and weaves, switching lanes unintentionally.

*This is it. He is going to kill me.*

He burps and coughs, momentarily missing the gas pedal.

I close my eyes.

\*\*\*Willard- MAY 1947\*\*\*

*I would kill her if I could.* My thoughts swim through the whiskey as if it's molasses. Francie is like one of those racehorses who've broken their legs. We are obliged to put them out of their misery. She's broken, just like them. Broken beyond repair. But you see now, murder is against the law here in the States, which is why I reckon the asylum is the next best thing.

As I drive down the road I feel freer than I've felt in a long time. Maybe it's the whiskey, but for once I feel like I am doing the right thing by this family of mine. *This family.* How is it that one night with a pretty girl has turned into this shit? Why, I should have known from the moment Lillian said she was pregnant that I needed to leave. But here I am. *Good old Willard,*

*sticking around*. That's why I need to get Francie out of the house and get her straightened out. I need her out. She is like a toxic gas that seeps around our house. How do you love someone who cries, hurts herself and refuses to better herself? For Christ's sake, someone that doesn't love you? Her father? There is something wrong with the child. She screams, cries and sleeps all day. She has a tongue of fire.

I don't want to be old providing for my adult daughter who I reckon will be fat from never leaving her bed. We can't be having someone in our house that abuses the other children. Just the other day she lashed out at Edward.

I heard about BIRTHAM County Hospital when I was in town last month. A gentleman and I got to talking at the bar and he told me that you can send them away and they will either come back fixed or not come back at all. Well, now, that sounded like quite the deal to me. The inheritance from Lillian's father will cover the cost, though there is not much left of it now. I refuse to look over at her. If the war taught me anything it's that you may not make it back alive so you need to do what you need to do.

\* \* \* FRANCIE- MAY 1947 \* \* \*

Swerves and bumps in the road keep me awake. My heart pounds fiercely as I try to think through my options. But I find myself in a fog, my thoughts jumbled together. *Do I jump out? Do I hit him? I feel heavy. Why do I feel heavy? If he is already going to kill me do I wear my seatbelt? Why is he doing this? What is this? Maybe I deserve this.*

My stomach is twisting. My father switches on the radio, set too loud, and we fly over slight hilliness of Wisconsin backcountry. Sinatra comes on, a family favorite. Frankie Laine, Dream Street, and nauseatingly, "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Da" by Uncle Remus replace him. As song replaces song, the truck becomes steadier on the road and my father begins to sit up straighter in

his seat. He still won't look at me. When he stops to stretch, I beg myself to open the car door and run.

*I can't. And I don't know why.*

As the sun peaks over the horizon, we stop at a gate, firmly ground into the earth in an open conformation. Rust is perched in notable crevices. My father rolls the window down and leans his head out, squinting in the early morning sunlight. I sit up and look around, my face feeling cracked from dried tears. The area around us is incredibly green and lush. A wood bee drifts by my window, headed for the shed I can see nestled further onto the property.

An enormous brick building looms further ahead. Vines wind their way up the left side, twisting over each other.

I look over at my father. Dark hair flecked with bits of grey frame his face with a slight curl. I'm sure some thought he was a handsome man. He turns his green eyes on me, a trait I had once been proud that we shared. He looks me over with an air of disgust. Or perhaps it is remorse or pity. I cannot tell.

He turns and scratches the back of his head as he re-starts the engine and pulls down the dirt road of what I would come to know as BIRTHAM County Mental Hospital, or my personal hell.

I don't have much with me. I am still wearing my patterned floral nightgown and I don't have shoes, which I realize with a start when my feet touch the rough gravel of the front drive of BIRTHAM. He refuses to look me in the eyes as he pulls a small satchel out of the bed of the truck. I wonder if he is second-guessing this. Although I am not entirely sure what this is. My eyes survey the faded brown as he hands me a bag.

We head up the steps and finally, fury comes alive within me and I sigh with relief. I'm angry and I like it.

*I'm not being left here.* By the time my father opens the doors I have broken into a sweat, both of my hands grip my bag so that the whites of my knuckles match the whites of my eyes. I bristle, deciding to wait on my attack. We step through the front door and the woman looks over the front of her desk, eyeing me, her nose scrunched up to her glasses, her sagging eyelids giving her ghoulish attributes. They speak in hushed tones while my thoughts pace furiously through my brain.

My father turns toward me, his eyes emotionless. "This is what is best for you. We reckon you are a troubled soul, Francie. You are a poison to our house and to me. This is where you belong." He looks at me, squinting as if he is looking at a specimen on a lab table. He reaches to grab my arm. The spark turns into a blaze and I yank myself backward, staggering into the wall.

I scream, "You can't do this. You can't leave me here!"

He looks at me grimly. "It's already been decided. This is where you need to be." He sighs. "The whole family is in agreement, you are dangerous to us."

I hit him. I hit him harder than I had hit anything or anyone in my life. He hardly flinches. My eyes streak around the room, tears blur my vision. I shoot for the door. Before my hands can grasp the large wooden handle, I am struck from behind. I crumple to the floor and break. Sobs cut my airways. I dig my fingernails into the floor until wood splinters creep up inside.

"Get up," he commands and I pay him no attention. "Get up!" He roars.

"You can't do this! Who do you think you are? You are a disgusting man! I hate you!" I scream up at him, tears streaming down my face. I grit my teeth. "I wish you had died in the Philippines. Rot in hell!"

Tears sear the edges of my eyes. “You know Mother has left you, right? Golly, Father, were you duped by Mother! She’s been with someone else for quite some time now,” I snarl as I gasp for air.

I squeeze my eyes shut. I panic as my fury subsides, replacing itself with a weakness that I only feel when I truly have nothing left to give. When I open my eyes, he is still looking at me. His eyes are a swirling mixture of pity and hatred. He thought I was insane. I brace, waiting for him to reach down and drag me to the counter, but instead, he turns toward the door, deftly opens it and leaves.

He never turns back.

I give a shriek of disbelief and bang my head on the floor.

Four large hands lift me. I scratch and bite and hit as they carry me to a stretcher. I am strapped to the stretcher so quickly all of my efforts of defense are in vain.

From there, I am wheeled through white doors that are smudged with reddish brown stains. I could tell my room was at the end of a large hallway, although my eyes could only gaze at the ceiling.

As we move down the hallway in silence, putrid smells waft under the doors of some of the rooms. Someone is moaning, another talking in fast whispers. A single scream pierces the air, coming from the other end of the hall. I draw my legs up to my chest shivering, despite the immeasurable humidity.

My breaths come in a shallow, fast pattern as the door unlocks and creaks open. The inside is dark, the scent thick with body odor. I draw back as the air hits my face. My stretcher stops at the door and I look at the men who have brought me up. One is stout sporting dirty blonde stubble and tired eyes. The other has jet-black hair, cut short, and dark eyes. He is

wearing a white button-down shirt, wrinkled with old stains and carries a dirty rag in his pocket. He looks to be in his late thirties and bores his eyes beneath my nightgown. I lower my eyes, unsure of what to do. The men free me, untying straps and releasing buckles in fluid motion. They take each arm.

“Get up,” the short one mutters. I extend my legs off the stretcher and reach my toes toward the floor. I gingerly lift myself off, balancing myself due to my inability to use my arms. I am not quick enough and my arm is pulled hard. I lose my balance and fall forward, only to be yanked back by the strong grip on my other arm, snapping my head backward.

As I walk in I feel a hand reach around my side from behind and try to grab my breast. I freeze and turn. The tall one smirks. I enter the room. They shut the door.

I hear the lock click.

“So, what’s the story?” A voice snickers behind me. “You’re a pretty one. My last one was not a pretty one. But she’s dead now so who cares?” She cackles and her cot squeaks as she rolls back onto it. I turn slowly and make my first eye contact with Minnie, the schizophrenic that I would come to spend my first days with. I spoke slowly, “I’m Frances. But everyone calls me Francie.” My head spins.

“Well, I’m Minnie. Got to this hell hole two weeks ago...” She continues speaking but I have stopped listening.

The scene blurs as I find my cot on the other side of the room. A thin blanket is messily folded on top of it and a flimsy pillow is thrown in the corner, suspending a small spider’s web.

I rip the small spider’s home from the wall as I take my pillow and blanket and lay down on the cot. Everything smells sour, like milk left in the sun for too long. I scrunch my eyes, pretending I am home. Pretending Elsie is going to come skipping through the door in the

morning sunlight and take my hand to go down to breakfast. That my mother is going to come in and brush the hair off my face as I sleep. I pretend I can hear my brothers muffled laughs drift through the windows. I pretend that my father has died at War.

Across the room, Minnie giggles to herself, murmuring something about bread and dogs and how all the bread in this place is poisoned.

I hear Minnie leave her cot and I scream at her to stay back. She doesn't listen. Instead, she creeps up to me on all fours, only standing when she reaches my bedside. "STOP screaming!" she belches. Frightened by her quick maneuver over to my side of the room I squeal and dig my heels into the bed as I inch to the corner of the wall. By the time a caretaker finds us, I have my head between my legs and Minnie is still screaming at me to stop screaming.

\* \* \* LILLIAN- MAY 1947 \* \* \*

I have been searching incessantly for Francie. No matter how hard I press Willard, he will not tell me where he took her. He says, "It's for the best." I don't believe him. How could I? I have cried incessantly since her departure.

Today, I purposefully do not make Willard's lunch. When he returns home, the house is empty and I sit at the kitchen table awaiting his entrance.

"Lillian!" a voice cracks the air as our front door is slammed. "Why didn't you make my goddamn lunch this morning?" He fumes into the kitchen.

"Will, honey, I wanted to spend lunch with you here this afternoon. I thought we could eat together. I left you a note on the table this morning."

"I saw the damn note."

"You see, we just have some talking to do." I struggle to keep the edge out of my voice and the façade alive.

“About what?”

*That about does it.* “What do you think it could POSSIBLY be about Willard? Could it be that you abducted my daughter and won’t tell me where you took her?”

“This is the shit you brought me home for?” Willard replies with an exaggerated sigh. “I reckon our family is doing swell now that she is out. And I’m sure deep down you agree,” his voice is choked full of impatience. “Now, get started on my lunch, I’m due back in thirty minutes and I’m done with your shit.”

The kitchen starts to blur and I wipe away the tears before they can course down my cheek.

“I am leaving.” I say quietly.

“What did you just say?”

“I said I’m leaving.”

Willard stands and saunters over to the counter where my back is pressed against the cabinets.

“And just where do you think you are going to go?” He says slowly. He spats his chew spit into the sink.

“I’m taking the children and we are leaving.” I look him square in the face.

He hits me so hard across the face that it feels like my eyes have left their sockets. I gush with tears and I grab my face to run out of the kitchen. I am pulled back by his hand and he whispers into my ear, “You are nothing without me. You can’t survive without me. What I did was for the good of this family. You know it. Now go clean yourself up.”

My face burns as I walk into our bedroom.

\* \* \* ELSIE- JUNE 1947\* \* \*

I can't believe Sissy got to go to such a wonderful place. Daddy says its gonna help her and I sure hope it does. It would be wonderful if Sissy didn't have to get up in the night crying or be so sad she can't get out of bed. It would also be grand if her and Daddy could get along. Daddy has been real nice recently. He has taken Ken, Eddie, and me to the lakeshore many times and let us play in the water. It's real cold but I still enjoy sticking my toes deep in the sand until they go numb and Daddy only screamed at me three times this week. Once, when I brought him the wrong beer from the fridge (I can't read very well yet), once when I asked him if I could get a third cookie, and also when I asked him if the boys were gonna go to the wonderful place next (because they are pretty naughty). Daddy only hit me one time and he apologized real big for it so I'm feeling pretty giddy that the family might be okay.

The only thing I see going on right now is Momma. Something is wrong with Momma and I can't tell what it is. She accidentally hit her face on the laundry door last week so she has got a big ole' bruise. But she still brushes my hair out of my eyes in the morning and combs it into piggy tails. She also tucks me in and sometimes plays dolls with me. But she doesn't sing as much as she used to.

She won't talk to Daddy. One time she thought I was out playing with Mary Jane, but I saw her throw the dishcloth across the kitchen and scream. Maybe she caught what Sissy has! That would be bad, because it's hard to be a Momma if you're like Sissy.

\* \* \* FRANCIE- JUNE 1947 \* \* \*

I have been here a month. I will no longer get out of bed. I will not eat or move. I have even peed myself three times. The wetness felt nice at first, warm and relieving.

There is a jostling at the door but I suspect it is more food as I drift in and out of sleep. Suddenly, two large hands grip me from behind. As I'm lifted from the bed I do nothing.

*I am nothing.*

I am placed on a stretcher and I am too feeble to open my eyes and see where I am going.

*I don't care.*

Two sets of double doors bang against the stretcher and I am brought into a bare room. The walls are white and unnaturally smooth. A large drain graces the center, darkened mildew covering the metal. Here I am stripped naked. The men leave. Another man in a white coat enters and I instinctively move my arm across my chest. He is tall, with greying hair combed backward. His face has the typical wrinkles of an old man, across his forehead and under his eyes. He strides into the corner of the room and pulls a large hose from the wall.

He starts to twist a knob and the hose comes to life, writhing in his hands like an untamed beast. Without glancing in my direction, he turns the hose on me. The force and icy temperature instantly cause a striking needle-like sensation to course up my body. He keeps the hose trained on me. The room is so small that there is nowhere to run that would avoid the hose. I start to scream as my wet hair whips across my face. Running across the tile, I slip and fall. Every blow of the hose feels like I am being stabbed with millions of needles. Finally, a buzzer sounds. The man calmly walks over to the knob and twists the hose off. As it becomes limp in his hands, he starts to coil it, glancing in my direction. I am huddled against one the corners; shivers slamming me into the wall and tears streaming down my face. Although my eyes are wide I refuse to make eye contact with him, instead choosing to look at the floor. He is wet as well and wipes the droplets off of his glasses with his pant leg. He pulls a clipboard out from a bag near the door

and begins to write on it, looking intently in my direction. It appears he is recording my every move. Then he finally speaks. His voice is clear and steady, “Francie Feiler? How do you feel?”

I don’t answer.

He sighs and walks across the room, unlocking the door and leaving me sitting on the floor. He comes striding back in almost instantly, with some medical equipment in his hands and a towel tucked neatly under his shoulder. As he squats next to me, he pulls the towel out and wraps it around my shoulders. Then he gets out his first bit of medical equipment and wraps a black band around my arm that he tightens by squeezing a ball. He reads the measure on the gauge attached and then pulls out a stethoscope and listens to my flapping heartbeat intently. I can see him counting under his breath. After about a minute, he stands. He looks me over critically then turns and moves toward the door. He opens it, hesitating for a moment, and then lets it slam shut behind him. The two men that undressed me come back in holding clothes. They lay them on the ground and I pick up the nightgown and panties and redress myself. I notice they are clean and I internally breathe a sigh of relief.

\* \* \* DR. STAFFORD- JUNE 1947 \* \* \*

**Place:** Birthing County Mental Hospital, WI **Date:** 14 June 1947

**Name:** Francie Feiler (#143) **Sex:** F **Born:** 9 April 1928

**Height:** 5ft 8in **Weight:** 126 lbs.

**Admitted From:** N/A **Past Medical History:** Not given

**Diagnosis:** Manic depressive insanity **Treatments:** Cold hose

**Summary of Case History:** Patient #143, as young and healthy as she is, is a prime candidate for my studies. She replies when spoken to on occasion, eats sparingly, and does not often leave her bed. She is lethargic, unwilling, and in a constant state of depression. The cold hose did

provide marked improvement in energy levels with pupil dilation and increased heart rate.

Patient has some bruising from cold hose and scrape on knee from falling during treatment.

When asked if she believes herself to be mentally ill, she replied, "If I say yes, sir, will I be here forever?" I did not answer of course.

**Future Directions:** Sterilization, electroshock?

\* \* \* LILLIAN- JUNE 1947\* \* \*

My only solace is Robert.

He is the only one who will listen and is actively trying to find Francie. Robert told me he is contacting different facilities where he thinks Willard may have dropped her off. He wants to go to the police. I don't want to— not yet.

Since Francie's departure, Willard has attempted to return to his role as a father for our other children, although he had never been a good father to begin with. He told them Francie went away to a "fanciful place, one that will help her get better and make her happy." When Willard isn't persecuting me behind closed doors, he seems to walk with pep in his step. Like his shoulders have had a large burden lifted off of them and he can now smile at our new neighbors and proudly say, "these are my children, aren't they wonderful?"

Everyday I wake up and feel the immeasurable pain in my chest caused by Francie's absence. It feels as though she left and gave all of her troubles to me. Willard's actions have ripped a hole in my chest, leaving a gaping wound of rotting flesh in its wake. I no longer gaze at the morning light trickling through the windows, causing the dust to dance in its streams. I still make all of the meals but I lack my joy in doing so. I find myself getting lost in thought while I clean up after the children, only coming to when I finally wring the dishcloth in the sink.

Looking at my other children pains me. *What is happening to her right now? Do they have patterned clothing for her? Is she safe? She must be so scared. Do they know she hates when her food touches?* These thoughts surround my everyday moments. There is no relief in her absence because I have no idea where she has gone. There would be more solace if she had died. But this? This is the worst torture of them all.

\* \* \* FRANCIE- JUNE 1947 \* \* \*

They put me back on the stretcher and wheel me back to my room. My eyes feel permanently widened and I writhe on the stretcher as heat seeps back into my skin. As I am wheeled along, I decide that BIRTHAM is not a place you want to be wide-awake to experience. Some of the doorways are open, with patients leaning on their feeble frames, their eyes sunken and hollow. The walls are barren and windows are few. As we descend to a lower floor, labeled "Floor E", (my room is on the first floor) I notice that the doors here are shut and locked, with only small slats that slide sideways to open. This is the floor where much of the moaning and screaming is heard at night.

When I get back into my room and hear the door close and the lock click behind me, I walk over to my cot and sit down. Its fragile frame groans under the weight of my body.

I turn to Minnie.

She sits on the floor in front of her cot examining her toenails with a quiet intensity. I can tell she feels my gaze as she shifts uncomfortably. She can't be more than thirty years old. I watch as she brushes dirty corn silk colored hair out of her eyes while muttering something under her breath.

Finally she looks up at me, eyes squinted. "Your hair is wet and your face is scrunchy. What'd they do to you?"

"Well..." I look at my feet.

The anger begins to rise in me. I shake my head, droplets from my hair ricocheting to the floor.

“Those bastards!”

Minnie shoots me a look of surprise.

“They sprayed me with a large hose while I was naked. It felt like needles piercing me all over.”

She nods thoughtfully. “Yeah, I thought so. They do that to all the depressed people” she quips as she skips across the room.

Before I can respond she glances fiercely into the corner of the room. “Shut up! You don’t say. I KNEW IT!” she exclaims at the wall. Then she turned back to me, her eyes grim. “They did poison the muffins.”

I crawl into bed. I fall into a fitful sleep of needles and poisoned muffins.

During the day, Minnie and I are mostly confined to our room. We sleep, read the outdated magazines that I found under my cot and ring the bell by the door if we have to go to the bathroom. The room feels burdened, as if it is filled with untreated festering wounds. I spend mind-numbingly long hours lying in bed. There is group time in the main recreation room from 12-2pm everyday. If you would like to attend and the doctors (who are mysteriously absent from my life, except for my spray downs) have checked “yes” on your chart, you can ring your bell and a man, I’ve come to understand they are attendants, will come and lead you down to the recreation room. I will not go. I do not want to see another living soul in this facility.

\* \* \*

The next morning, the taller man with the hair and eyes comes to bring breakfast, which is odd to me as the cook's assistant usually brings breakfast, a putrid oatmeal that has been made in what I can only guess is dishwater.

He unlocks the door and saunters in, but he does not have the breakfast tray with him. "Come with me" The tall man says, his voice unwavering and commanding.

I look over at Minnie who is curled in a ball at the end of her bed, the bones of her back protruding along her spine.

I get up off the bed. He heads toward the door, glancing behind to make sure I am following. "You're getting a procedure today" he starts looking straight ahead. "I hear they are going to sterilize you." He pauses for dramatic effect and turns to look at me. My mind reels. *Sterilization?* He continues, "Doc thinks it has helped some of the females around here get their minds back. You're next." I am too stunned to speak. His eyes have a strange look to them and I catch them lingering just under my neck.

My stomach lurches, rising and twirling in undulating knots. Outside the door there is a stretcher and he waits while I sit down on it. He wheels me down through the white double doors. We enter a sterile room, with orbs hanging from the ceiling. Two women come in and undress me, laying me flat under the orbs. One of them asks to see my wrist and slides a needle into my veins. My eyes follow the tube from its resting place in my arm to its origin above me. I see fluid entering my body.

I shiver.

\* \* \*

*My head.*

An aching wave sloshes from one side of my skull to the other as I open my eyes. The burn of antiseptic meets my nose. I am in a long and narrow room. There are five other beds placed adjacent to mine- filled with other moaning bodies. My vision blurs quickly. Tears glisten as they fall onto the dry skin of my knuckles as I wrench the blanket into my balled fists. *I am barren.* Hollowness eats at me. I caress my swollen abdomen carefully, pretending I am pregnant for a moment. The thought hurts more than I thought it would. A nurse comes in with a squeak of the door and wheels me back to my room.

\* \* \* LILLIAN- JUNE 1947 \* \* \*

I told Willard and the children that I was going to visit my Aunt Sue in Ohio. I told them she has come down with pneumonia and they don't think she will last much longer. Willard grumbled and told me he was bringing his sister over to watch the children and Elsie pulled at my blouse and begged me not to go. But, I must go. Robert has been researching the asylums in Wisconsin and he wants to take me with him to investigate each one in person. He is as dedicated as I am to find my Francie. Although I keep telling myself that Francie is my only reason for going I am giddy to have Robert as my own – away from the eyes and ears of this neighborhood. I've only snuck him into our house twice, both times when Willard was at War. The children were at school and Francie was trying her hand at helping with the war effort at the steel factory. She only lasted three days, but for two of those days, Robert and I shared an intimacy that I had never felt before. Legs were tangled in baby blue sheets and he placed soft kisses on my neck.

I leave early in the morning on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June. The children are on summer break and I know they will be fine – I'll only be gone a couple of weeks. As I pull my suitcase through the front door, the side catches and rips off some of the trim that lines our doorway. I hastily bend

down to examine the damage I have caused and as I do, I hear a rumble as Robert's red car slows to halt three houses down. Brushing myself off as I hurry down the drive of our house, I scurry to his car. The engine hums. He smiles under his freckles. "Morning Lillian. Have everything you need?"

"Yes, I believe I do." I say back. With each second we roll down the road, my smile gives away the lightness I feel. In this moment, I am freer than I have been in years. Robert's voice cuts through my reverie. "We are checking the State Hospital in Milwaukee first. Then we will stop by Woodsen Row, Creekside, and we will check Birtham last. We will find your daughter Lillian." He finishes, determination lining his features.

"I think I love you, Robert Monroe," I say then continue, "Thank you for doing this. You have no idea how much this means to me." I gently squeeze his thigh as he smiles and turns on the radio. It crackles to life as I settle in for our drive to the State Hospital.

\* \* \* FRANCIE- JUNE 1947 \* \* \*

I found out that they are transferring me, the specimen, to "Floor D." I have come to call myself the specimen here because that is all I am to anyone. Something broken to look at, something to treat, something to abuse. Minnie will be moved to "Floor E" which I think is for others like Minnie. They have kept Minnie in the wet pack for days now and I think they want to subdue her before transfer. The wet pack entails wrapping a patient up in wet sheets from their head to their toes. Then, they are left on their bed. Her sheets have dried long ago and when they dry they tighten. She has been squirming and crying for half of the day.

My abdomen is healing from my procedure, but I pick at the stitches at night. Sometimes I cause a bleed but it doesn't bother me. They feed me pills to keep the pain out of my stomach. They dull my mind and make me sleep. An attendant comes in the mornings, at lunch, and in the

evenings. If I don't swallow, they tie me to the bed (there are straps under the bed for this very purpose), and force them down my throat with well water. Minnie doesn't get the pills. But I think they might be good for her. One time she bit an attendant. He yelped in pain and instantly hit her across the face. He hit her so hard she was knocked unconscious. They picked her up and carried her out of the room and I didn't see her for three days. When she came back, she was quiet, her head hung in such a way that I thought she may be dead. They laid her on the bed and in the darkness of our room I could barely make out the green waves of the bruise on her face.

These pills make me feel like I am submerged under water. I wanted to die before, when I was home. I wanted to sink into the nothingness and rest. But I had no idea then what truly wanting to die felt like.

\*\*\*DR. STAFFORD-July1947\*\*\*

**Place:** Birthing County Mental Hospital, WI **Date:** 1 July 1947

**Name:** Francie Feiler (#143) **Sex:** F **Born:** 9 April 1928

**Height:** 5ft 8in **Weight:** 110 lbs.

**Admitted From:** N/A **Past Medical History:** Not given

**Diagnosis:** Manic depressive insanity **Treatments:** Cold hose, sterilization, Methadone

**Summary of Case History:** Patient #143 is recovering from her sterilization in her new quarters. After four weeks of observation we have determined she will reside on Floor D, with the other manic-depressives. Patient #143 is still showing signs of her mental illness. Though on Floor D she has the ability to move about during the daytime hours, she chooses not to. Even though we have told her repeatedly she does not have to call an attendant to go to the restroom, as there are buckets in the room for this very purpose, she still does so, or she defecates on herself. Very characteristic of her condition. Patient #143 has lost weight, appetite poor. On

Floor D she has the chance to meet and recuperate with others like herself. She shares a room with four other patients, #155, 75, 122, 33. Her recovery from sterilization has been smooth and I will check back in on her progress in a couple of weeks. Patient is perfect candidate for frontal lobotomy procedure. Possible transfer scheduled for mid July.

**Future Directions:** frontal lobotomy, electroshock?

As I finish writing in Patient #143's chart, I lean into the wall and close my eyes. The influx of patients to Birtham is rising and we are quickly running out of beds – unfortunately Floor D is full to capacity. But, no matter, some of these women will be leaving soon anyhow. I have been discussing an upcoming procedure – the lobotomy- with Walter Freeman. I went to school with Walter and he believes that physically entering the brain may be the way to fix our patients. He is targeting manic-depressive women as his first subjects and I believe my women on Floor D will fit the bill perfectly. The procedure entails numbing the patient and drilling holes into the sides of their skull. From there, he moves along the frontal cortex, breaking ties with the rest of the brain as he maneuvers. There is evidence that he has been able to subdue patients and provide lasting relief for them. I am eager to provide subjects to study.

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