

James Scott
7 Railway Terrace, Mile End
South Australia
July 29th, 1963

Dear Brother,

Sorry Robbie, I won't be able to make it for your birthday as I couldn't get the time off - we're working with a patient here who's got a trial in a week and the Doc wants to be fully staffed.

I know you said in your last letter you thought I should just quit; I think you're probably right. This place is so archaic it's difficult to keep treating these people like this. I told you about the showers, but did you know we still strip them down before bed? It's shocking. The Doc insists they be virtually stripped at night and their clothes balled up beside their door. I suppose this is just to avoid smuggling anything into their rooms, but it feels awful to demean them like that.

Maybe you're right. I might just have to quit. I don't know if I can leave this place like this though, I want the best for these people and if I leave they might just find someone horrible to replace me.

Before I forget, keep an eye on the news. Vietnam is heating up, it won't be long before we have to send more boys over. A few of them might end up right back here, crazy and troubled, being treated in these walls.

Give mum my love and let her and dad know I'm hoping to make the trip soon, but have to work around the Doc's schedule. I look forward to seeing you and the family whenever I can,

Talk soon,
James

Writer's Note - Warden Treating the Insane

Near the end of the ward's life the world was going through a shift. New social movements rallied against racism and the Vietnam war, and there began a shift towards a new morality and ethicality. New technologies exposed more of the world to the average person than ever before. Modern colour photography could show the ward in all its archaic glory. Patients were still virtually stripped each night, as they had been in the 1800s, amenities were limited and, with the notable exception of television, the ward looked much the same as it had for 80 years. In a place like the Z-ward, ethical treatment might have been a scorned concept, but as the world changed into the 1960s and 1970s more and more new warders and doctors would have wanted to treat these troubled patients differently.

This letter is written from the perspective of a real person who worked at the Z-Ward in the 1970s. He, with coloured photographs, captured the tiny cells and balled-up bundles of clothes to expose the ward's archaic practices, this character expresses sympathy for these patients and contempt at their treatment.

This character is semi-based on a real person in the 1970s who exposed the wards practices. I envision him as a middle-aged, classically trained nurse who doesn't think the ward uses ethical practices. He is slightly jaded and is contemplating quitting, but knows that he is one of the few staff who treat these patients well.

**This series of letters was written by Sam Kuhl, a Flinders University student, who was on placement with the National Trust of South Australia. They are works of fiction informed by history and should be read as such. All names and addresses have been made up.*