GILLETTE & L'ORÉAL,

WOMEN USA

VOL. III

Kentucky • Louisiana • Maine • Maryland
Massachusetts • Michigan • Minnesota • Mississippi



FERDINANDO FREGA

AMERICA

The women in these books are not characters.
They are **industrial and cultural coordinates.**
They are the fractured points through which America is interpreted. A mother in Texas is not a mother in the Bronx. A worker in Ohio is not a worker in Los Angeles. A retiree in Florida is not a retiree in Montana. Women do not enter the chapters: **they determine them.**

ADULT — The Woman Inside Real America

She is the woman living during the storm: precarious work, racism, impossible rents, toxic relationships.
She is the most honest lens in contemporary America.

GIRLFRIEND — The Woman Inside the American Promise

Religion, closed communities, control, addictions.
This is the woman who lives under the illusion of a "better tomorrow" that America has been peddling for a century.

WIFE — The Woman Inside the Structure

Domestic patriarchy, domestic violence, forced roles.
This is the woman America celebrates in advertisements and abandons.

MOTHER — The Woman Who Rules the Country

Hereditary poverty, children raised in hardship, single mothers.
This is the invisible backbone of the United States.

WORKER — The Woman Who Keeps America Lit

Exhausting shifts, low wages, job discrimination.
It is women who sustain the economy while the economy ignores them.

UNEMPLOYED — The Woman Expelled from the System

Eviction, hunger, addictions, failures.
She is the woman America does not want to see because she tells the truth.

MIDDLE AGE — The Woman Who Has Seen It All

Loneliness, untreated illnesses, age discrimination.
This is the woman America considers "out of the market."

PENSIONER — The Invisible Woman

Elderly poverty, isolation, erased memories.
She is the woman who built the country and whom the country has forgotten.

WOMEN NEVER FORGOTTEN

This is not a list.
It is a map. A map of women who left marks that America tried to erase. There are no museum heroines: these are real lives. Every time someone says, "you can't," somewhere there was a woman who did it anyway. Memory is not nostalgia: it is resistance. And these five books serve only one purpose:
to put things back where they belong.

WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES

FERDINANDO FREGA

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CHAPTER ZERO

Here, the world is not a territory: it is a limit.
The North Pole does not welcome, does not forgive, leaves no room for error. White reigns as an absolute entity, silent and without memory. Temperature is not meteorological data: it is a predator. The night lasts for months, crushing thoughts, distorting people's contours, swallowing their will.

The communities are few, small, and closed. Inuit, Yupik, Arctic peoples live where no one would choose to stay. Here, every individual is essential to the survival of the group. If you are not useful, you become a burden. And those who become burdens disappear into the silence, into the snow, into the logic of an environment that makes no concessions.

The scientific foundations add another kind of chill: that of hierarchies. Here, a woman is a rare presence, an anomaly who must adapt or succumb.

In this place, the concept of "disappearance" does not exist.
There is only the white that erases everything.

Inuit and Yupik women

The Arctic girl is not pampered: she is prepared.
She learns early to resist the cold, the darkness, and hunger. She must become useful to the clan, because here, identity is not personal. It is functional. The woman bears the burden of family and community: food, fire, children, skins, care. No one talks about rights. No one talks about fragility. Depression exists, but it has no name. Violence exists, but it has no witnesses.

Woman of the scientific bases

Educated, competent, accustomed to discipline. She arrives as a researcher, technician, and doctor. She quickly discovers that the

North Pole does not recognize qualifications. Here, only mental toughness counts. Male hierarchies dominate her, and any sign of weakness is interpreted as weakness. It is an environment where strength is not enough: extreme self-control is required.

Western “outside” woman

Raised in freedom, she arrives believing she can conquer the cold. But the place breaks her: solitude, tiny spaces, endless silences. Foundations are not communities, they are mechanisms. And a woman, inside a mechanism designed by men, must fight to avoid disappearing.

The Journey to the Edge of the World

My neighbor, Antonio, known as Nino, had been talking for years about the North Cape, the midnight sun, the months without darkness. It was a dream he kept in his pocket, like something impossible.
One morning in May, I rang his doorbell and said only this: "Pack your suitcase. I will be back in an hour. We'll be back in 30 days." He looked at me, surprised, happy. His wife, worried, asked what our plans were. "Chasing a dream," I replied.

We got in the car. Our wives looked at us like we were crazy. But this trip was real.
Nino was already full of questions. “Where are we going? How much money should I bring?” “Relax,” I told him. “We'll be there in 54 hours. Only 5,000 km. We are in the new Range Rover. Enjoy the ride.”

Every 300 km I had to stop: he, twelve years older than me, had his own rhythm.
I had water and liquids; he had coffee and physical needs. And the further we went, the more he talked about his life.

Things I would never have known if it had not been for that endless road.

Two men alone in a car always talking about women.
He had only met his wife. I laughed. I reassured him: "We're the same way."

He asked me how I managed to stay sane while driving 60 hours. I told him about Russia, when at 22 I drove 51 hours to meet a woman I had never met. "Distances aren't limits," I told him, “They are excuses. I've never had any."

The arrival in the white

We entered Norway.
A hostel on the road. We would leave the car there and continue by sled.

The guide was covered, impenetrable.
When she took off her glasses, I discovered she was a woman. A Norwegian woman, silent, direct, glacial. Nino in the center of the sled, she in front, me at 190 cm behind, bringing up the rear.

It was still daylight.
My watch showed the time, but it did not tell me whether it was night or morning. It was midnight sun. We had reached the North Cape.

Nino cried.
He hugged me. I said to him, laughing, “Be careful… people might think we’re gay.” We laughed, but we were at the edge of the world.

Then came the frost:
–52°C.

Entrance to the true Arctic

They took us to a metal container to change clothes.
Extremely heavy, padded suits, closed with complex zippers.

I paid for the guide.
Nino was left in an igloo with some men; I was left in another with a family: an elderly man, between 70 and 80, and three women between 30 and 50.

It was a closed world.
Simple. Brutal.

The man stood aside.
The women kept up the pace. And the bathroom was a hill five meters from the igloo: the poop froze before it hit the ground. My first pee became a yellow arctic star. It was the North greeting me.

The middle-aged woman, Magi, spoke a little English.
The rest were gestures, eyes, hands. The language of the cold.

When I was not sure how to use the suit, she, without thinking, touched my crotch to show me a hidden zipper.
There was no malice, no embarrassment: just function. Survival.

The three days in the igloo

They brought food.
Smoked fish, raw fish, cod liver, whale belly. And shark balls.
There was no choice. There was no alternative. It was what nature provides.

Then I drank:
a red liquid. I thought it was wine. It was filtered, boiled, sweetened whale blood. I drank it. It gave me a strength I had never felt before. A primal energy.

I thought it was cocaine.
No. It was the North entering the body.

The women watched me.
The old man went out hunting. I rested and drank blood. Three days without phone, internet, computer, without Nino. Just me and them.

There was no night.
Only light, fire, ice, and breath.

The three women lay down to sleep.
I looked for a place. The youngest raised her arm and motioned for me to come closer. They burst out laughing. I did not understand.
They said I was their "Christmas."

A way of saying I had been accepted.

I tried to give them some money to say thank you.
They refused. They just wanted a hug. And a few words in Calabrian to feel closer.

There I understood the value of true gifts:
those that cannot be bought or sold.

The guide's leave

After three days, the guide arrived.
She spoke with the three women for an hour. I was outside. I did not understand what they were saying. It was not my business. It was their language, their world, their law.

In the container, while I was undressing, the guide entered.
Curious. Direct. Nordic.

She hugged me tightly.
She kissed me. Her skin was as white as milk. Her eyes were as blue as the August sky.

She asked me to take her away.
She would have done anything to get out of that world.

I smiled respectfully.
I could not. I should not have.

I left her just one promise:
"If you need anything, write me a letter. I'll help you." She even refused the money. She was a beautiful woman, but lonely. A loneliness that cannot be seen from afar. A loneliness that the cold does not forgive.

The return home

We went to pick up Nino.
He was thrilled. He did not want to go back. But I had an appointment with his wife.

He told everyone about his three days.
I kept quiet. I never shared anything with the man. Only with paper.

And so, while Nino returned to his world,
I was already on my way to another. Another destination. Another encounter.

Welcome.

Epilogue

The North does not take you: it changes you. And it never gives you back whole.

Men come to the North Pole seeking light, silence, photographs, dreams.
Women stay to survive.

Men tell what they have seen.
Women keep silent about what they have experienced.

Men return.
Women stay. They remain in the cold, in houses of snow, in silences unheard. They remain to support communities that do not celebrate them. They remain to protect children, the elderly, strangers. They remain invisible.

I took only one memory from there:
a beautiful, incredibly beautiful woman, but alone. Not in a romantic sense. In a human sense. In a tragic sense.

Reflection

The North does not kill the body.
It kills presence. And what remains is white: a place where women live and disappear at the same time.

This is why I write.
Because extreme places do not tell their own story.
And those who travel through them cannot afford the luxury of remaining silent.

Not me. Not me. My land gave birth to me, and the rest of the world welcomes me not as a guest, but as one of the family.

From the absolute whiteness of the North, I descended into the absolute confusion of the United States.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Impossible Assignment

Working for an American company for eighteen years gives you something no other company in the world can: a work culture, procedures, a clear mission, and a system of values that are not theory—they are daily practice. They do not explain them to you; they build them for you. And they do it without asking your permission.

I was in the New York office when I was offered a job I had never imagined.
Not a promotion. Not a transfer. An experiment.

A confidential program, created to validate a model of human relationships within the United States. They had not chosen managers, psychologists, or trainers. They had chosen people with a certain type of real-world experience. And my name came up—even though I had been in sales for eighteen years. They were not looking at the role: they were looking at the mind.

The test was simple to explain and exceedingly difficult to complete:

visit the 50 American states in one year,
choosing the cities myself and staying at least a week in each.

The last two weeks would be a forced vacation.
They would cover all the expenses. I just had to live, observe, understand, and submit a report every Monday. A human, dry, precise account.

I signed the contract.
I notified the house. They did not ask anything. They just wanted

to know if the monthly supplies had arrived. I was about to face a year in America. They, as always, were facing the next month.

To be on the safe side, my salary was deposited directly into my bank account in Italy.
It was a polite way of telling me: "Don't do anything stupid. Live with what you have. Let's see who you really are."

Only fifteen years later did I gain access to my original reports, the analyses, and the material they had collected about me. This book was born from there. I obtained approval to publish it, on one condition: never name the company that ordered it.

It does not matter.
This story is not about logos. It is about a man in a country impossible to understand unless you experience it firsthand.

Do I start from the furthest point?

The logical choice was to start from the margins, not the center. For two simple reasons:

1. I was fresh from the experiment: high lucidity, maximum attention.
2. By starting from the extreme I could correct the course and finish the journey cleanly.

I did not need to start in Boston or Chicago.
I had to start at a border. From a place that was America only on paper.

I chose Juneau, the capital of Alaska.
Isolated. Reachable only by boat or plane. A city that belongs to no one. The perfect place to start.

Optimize Resources

Before leaving, I did what an American respects primarily:
I organized myself like a professional, not like a tourist.

I called three of the most popular airlines, those with the largest domestic networks.
In less than an hour, I purchased a booklet of fifty domestic flights at a 60% discount.

No time limits.
No day limits. No restrictions. Just one condition: use them within a year.

I did the same with hotel chains, Uber Taxis, and car rental companies, and then prepared a proper schedule of the stages, the methods, but not the times.

I was ready.

It was my first real success.
The first sign was that I knew how to move. America rewards those who act, not those who wait.

When the company saw the transaction, they did what an American culture always does: they checked the reliability.

Was I able to manage a year of constant movement?
Was I able to deal with unexpected events, distances, and emergencies? Was I independent?

For this reason, before leaving, I fixed another crucial detail:

I made sure I had a monthly credit limit of at least $100,000 on my credit card.

It was not meant to be spent.
It was meant to demonstrate that we could manage them.

Americans think like this:
if you do not have autonomy, you do not have freedom. And if you do not have freedom, you cannot be evaluated.

From that moment on, the program was no longer an assignment. It was a mission.

AND NOW WE REALLY TRAVEL

Alaska is part of the United States only by geography. It is another world.

It is the place where women disappear without a trace.
Where a complaint never reaches its destination. Where cities are merely civilized islands in the middle of a savage continent.

Juneau was my first test:
a capital city with no roads connecting it to the rest of the country. A piece of America that does not feel like America.

Here I began to understand something: the journey would not be geographical.
It would be human.

BLOCK 1 (Volume I)

Alabama – Alaska – Arizona – Arkansas – California – Colorado – Connecticut – Delaware – Florida – Georgia

BLOCK 2 (Volume II)

Hawaii – Idaho – Illinois – Indiana – Iowa – Kansas – Kentucky – Louisiana – Maine – Maryland

BLOCK 3 (Volume III)

Massachusetts – Michigan – Minnesota – Mississippi – Missouri – Montana – Nebraska – Nevada – New Hampshire – New Jersey – New Mexico

BLOCK 4 (Volume IV)

New York – Washington

BLOCK 5 (Volume V)

North Carolina – North Dakota – Ohio – Oklahoma – Oregon – Pennsylvania – Rhode Island – South Carolina

BLOCK 6 (Volume VI)

South Dakota – Tennessee – Texas – Utah – Vermont – Virginia – West Virginia – Wisconsin – Wyoming

KENTUCKY

Kentucky is a state that exists in two dimensions:
the surface tills of coal mines, whiskey, horses, and green hills;
the depths, however, are made of ancient poverty, isolated communities, rigid religion, and rare opportunities.

It is a land that is no longer rural, but it is not yet modern. Suspended. Slow. Tired. And when a land is suspended, it is women who hold it up.

In Kentucky, a woman does not disappear because of an event. She disappears because of a social legacy that has required her to sacrifice herself for generations. Family, children, precarious work, church, neighbors, other people's problems: it is all on their shoulders.

Her absence is not noise.
It is weight.

The Woman from the Former Mining Areas – 41 years old

Coal built Kentucky and destroyed it.
Mines close, men lose their jobs, dependence on chemicals increases, poverty spreads.

Women here are holding up the aftermath.
– husbands without jobs – children raised in frustration – exceptionally low wages – overdoses affecting friends and relatives – exasperated communities.

They work in shops, schools, service providers, and support workers.
They do everything that broken economic systems no longer do.

Her absence is social:
if she were not a woman, the state would collapse. But no one recognizes her.

The Derby and Breeding Lady – 36 years old

Kentucky is famous for its horses and the Derby.
Behind that elegant image lies an army of women who clean stables, handle animals, work early shifts, and work for ridiculous wages.

The glamour is in front.
The sweat is in the back.

Her absence is economic:
without it the industry does not function, but it remains a cog ignored by the public and politicians.

The Woman Trapped in Religion – 48 years old.

In many Kentucky counties, the church has more power than the state.

A woman must be:
– a mother – a wife – a moral figure – a respectable presence – obedient to the community.

She cannot step out of her role.
She cannot reinvent herself. She cannot express doubts or fragility.

Her absence is cultural:
it does not belong to itself. It belongs to the religious narrative of the place.

The Minimum Work Woman – 29 years old

Kentucky thrives on low-paying jobs.
And those jobs are all women's.

Cashiers, waitresses, floor cleaners, nursing home workers, school assistants.
Lives consumed by precarious shifts, expensive gas, children to raise, and zero prospects.

Her absence is economic and mental:
she sees no way out and no one offers it to her.

Epilogue – Kentucky

Kentucky is a mosaic of tradition, poverty, religion, and hardship. Women are its backbone. And precisely because of this, they become invisible.

Absence here is a collective habit.
A way of life. A mistaken normality that is never questioned.

Reflection – Kentucky

Each state shows a different face of absence.
Kentucky shows the one born of economic collapse and tradition clinging to the past.

Here the woman holds everything that men have lost,
everything that religion imposes, everything that poverty stabilizes.

It is the strong link,
but treated as the weak link.

And that is precisely why this state is necessary in the volume:
to show what happens when a society leaves everything on women's shoulders and then behaves as if it were normal.

LOUISIANA

Louisiana is a state of fierce contrasts.
It is culture, music, history, cuisine, spirituality, and identity. But it is also poverty, instability, addiction, racial inequality, devastating hurricanes, disorganized politics, and a fragile social system.

It is a place where beauty coexists with ugliness, unbalanced. Everything here has two sides: New Orleans is celebration and trauma, Baton Rouge is politics and decline, and rural parishes are community and isolation.

The woman in Louisiana does not disappear by chance.
She disappears because she is the only stable figure in an unstable land. And this stability consumes her.

Her absence is the result of three heavy factors:
– **deep-rooted poverty**

– **cyclical environmental disasters**
– **harsh cultural patriarchy.**

Here, women govern families, neighborhoods, entire communities.
And while everyone else appears, she fades away.

The Woman from New Orleans – 35 years old

New Orleans is music, celebration, chaos, and history.
But it is also one of the most complex and challenging cities in the country.

The woman who works here lives on three fronts simultaneously:
– predatory tourism – urban violence – unstable economy

Works in:
– bars – hotels – restaurants – tourist tours – public services – live music – nightlife

Mandatory smiles.
Low wages. High rents. Heavy customers. Exhausting hours.

Her absence is moral:
the city uses its energy and returns it exhausted.

Everyone wants the "magic" of New Orleans.
No one pays those who create it.

The African American Woman of the Poor Parishes – 42 years old

Outside New Orleans lies rural and impoverished Louisiana.
Small houses, weak schools, minimal services, and ridiculous wages.

The African American woman here plays three roles simultaneously:
– worker – mother – social pillar of the community.

She works wherever she can:
– nursing homes – convenience stores – fast-food kitchens – cleaning – informal care.

Without her, the community does not function.
Yet she lives with low wages, chronic stress, little healthcare, and the constant presence of domestic violence.

Her absence is historical:
it descends from the same structure that for generations has always placed it at the bottom of the social ladder.

The Woman Who Survives Hurricanes – 39 Years Old

In Louisiana, there is no such thing as a "stable" life.
Hurricanes change everything: homes destroyed, jobs lost, families separated, memories lost.

The woman is the one who:
– evacuates the children – protects the documents – cleans the house invaded by water – starts from nothing – manages insurance policies that pay late or never – keeps the family calm while inside it collapses.

For men, reconstruction is physical.
For women, it is **psychological.**
Year after year.

Her absence is environmental:
each storm takes away a piece of its energy, until almost nothing remains.

No one reimburses her for this.

The Woman of Heavy Traditions – 51 years old

Louisiana thrives on strong, deep-rooted, almost sacred traditions.

A woman must be:
– the perfect mother – a figure at home – a cornerstone of the extended family – a presence in church – a carer for the elderly – a guide for the little ones – the supporting structure of everything.

It is an ancient role, never updated.

She cannot refuse family requests.
She cannot talk back. She cannot say "no." She cannot think about herself without feeling guilty.

Her absence is cultural and emotional:
she is so busy supporting everyone that she disappears from herself.

Epilogue – Louisiana

Louisiana is a blend of beauty and unhealed wounds.
And amid this ordinary chaos, women hold everything together: family, work, community, traditions, emotional survival.

Their absence is a paradox:
the more they do, the less they are seen.

Louisiana does not erase women with a single force.
It erases them with a thousand small, daily forces: poverty, hurricanes, tourism, racial history, family roles, lack of support.

It is a slow,
deep, silent erasure.

Reflection – Louisiana

Each state exhibits a different form of absence.
Louisiana exhibits one caused by: – natural disasters – social disasters – family disasters.

It is the State where the woman survives for everyone,
but no one survives for her.

It is the state where trauma becomes routine
and routine becomes identity.

Louisiana shows that the absence of women is not just poverty or a lack of rights.
It is also a weariness so profound that no one notices it anymore.

And that is why this chapter is crucial:
to remember that behind every postcard of New Orleans, there is a woman holding something the world cannot see.

MAINE

Maine is one of the most beautiful and rugged states in America. Endless forests, cold coasts, lighthouses, fishing villages, and immense silence. It is a romantic land only for those who visit. For those who live there, it is **pure isolation.**

The population is sparse, the distances are long, the winters last for months, the opportunities are few.
Maine does not attack you:
it consumes you.

Women here disappear for three reasons:
– **geographical solitude**
– **unstable seasonal jobs**
– **small communities that stifle change.**

It is a state where nature dominates
and humans adapt. Always. Too much.

The Maine woman does not fall from shock.
She falls from repetition.

The Woman of the Fishing Villages – 39 years old

The Maine coast thrives on fishing: lobster, cod, short seasons, and hard labor.

The woman here manages everything that the boat does not:
– coordination – nets to be fixed – sales – family accounting – family – home – sudden emergencies.

The sea is beautiful from afar.
Up close, it is an unforgiving master.

Her absence is both economic and physical:
she lives in a sector where earnings depend on the weather, the season, and luck. And when the season ends, so does security.

The Woman Who Lives in the Long Winter – 52 years old

Maine in winter is a wall:
snow, frost, darkness, infinite silences.

Inland—Millinocket, Greenville, the Lake District—women face:
– months without real social contact– dangerous roads– isolated homes– little health care– widespread seasonal depression– distance from essential services

If she is sick, she waits.
If she needs a doctor, she drives for hours. If she collapses emotionally, no one sees her.

Her absence is geographical:
it disappears because it is far from everything.

The Seasonal Jobs Woman – 28 years old

In summer, Maine explodes:
tourism, B&Bs, restaurants, cruises.

The woman here works tirelessly:
– serving – cleaning – cooking – welcoming – managing – tidying up.

It is hard, poorly paid, unstable work.
It lasts three months, then nothing.

It goes from intense hours to empty weeks.
From money flowing in quickly to months of survival.

Her absence is economic:
it always lives between two seasons but belongs to neither.

The Woman of Small Communities – 46 years old

Small towns in Maine are gated communities:
everyone knows everything about everyone, and no one ever really changes.

The woman here must be straightforward:
– mother – stable worker – reliable presence – “good person” according to local codes.

She cannot reinvent herself.
She cannot change jobs easily. She cannot leave the community without being judged.

Her absence is cultural:
it belongs to the territory more than to itself.

She is a prisoner not of wickedness,
but of habit.

Epilogue – Maine

Maine is a state that watches you in silence.
And silence, when it is too much, becomes a burden.

Women here disappear into distances, seasons, repeated roles, precarious jobs, closed villages, long winters.

The absence is not obvious.
It is under the skin. It is a daily occurrence.

Maine does not hit.
It lets you go.

Reflection – Maine

Every state reveals a form of absence.
Maine reveals the one born of geography:

The more beautiful the territory,
the harder it is for those who live there.

Here, the woman is not erased by conflict,
but by quiet. By repetition. By distance. By the cold that never passes. By life that shrinks.

Maine teaches one thing:
female absence can also be a landscape. A map. A season that never ends.

And that is why this chapter is necessary:
because America is not just violence or chaos. It is also a consuming silence.

MARYLAND

Maryland is a deceptive state.
Small, overlooking the Atlantic, near Washington. Elegant on the surface, complex on the inside.

It is a territory split in two:
– rich, educated, protected, orderly suburbs – difficult, poor cities, marked by crime and abandonment.

It is one of the states with the highest average income in America and at the same time one with the most evident inequalities.

Women here do not disappear for a single reason.
They disappear because of **too many worlds to which they must adapt:**
metropolis, suburbs, politics, healthcare, urban poverty, racial identities.

The absence of women in Maryland is **manifold.**
It varies depending on the zip code.

The Baltimore Woman – 34 years old

Baltimore is one of the most complicated cities in the United States:
entrenched poverty, high crime, social isolation, overserved services, and at-risk schools.

Here, women hold everything together:
– children – precarious work – dangerous neighborhoods – prohibitive cost of living – slow transportation – lack of real protection.

She works wherever she can:
supermarkets, clinics, assistance centers, fast-food restaurants, nursing homes, cleaning.

Her absence is urban:
the city talks about “redevelopment” but never starts from its life.

It is visible to the system only when it serves as a workforce.
It disappears when its rights are recognized.

The Woman from the Rich Suburbs – 42 years old

The wealthy part of Maryland is perfect:
movie-worthy homes, high incomes, elite schools, ambitious careers, well-structured families.

The woman here disappears for a different reason:
the pressure of perfection.

It is a competitive environment where the female role must be impeccable:
– total family management – high social image – perfect children – compulsory volunteering – parallel job or career that must never “overshadow” the partner.

She lives in a context that wants her always present,
without ever giving up, without ever showing fatigue.

Her absence is a matter of identity:
the community considers her a role, not a person.

The African American Woman of the Central Corridor – 45 years old

Maryland has one of the largest and most influential African American communities in the United States.

Women here are a driving force in society:
– they work in healthcare – they work in schools – they run offices and public administration – they keep large families together – they support entire communities.

But it lives with a double burden:
racial and gender.

It does everything.
It holds everything. It appears everywhere. But it is rarely listened to.

Her absence is political:
she supports the State without sitting at the tables where decisions are made.

The Woman Who Works in Healthcare – 37 years old

Maryland is one of the states with the highest number of female healthcare workers, thanks to its proximity to Washington and its large regional hospitals.

Women here live within a system that never stops demanding:
– endless shifts – overloaded departments – repeated emergencies
– extremely high responsibilities – little psychological protection
– salaries that do not compensate for the emotional impact.

It is the one that cures everyone:
the elderly, children, the chronically ill, urban emergencies, environmental disasters.

Her absence is operational:
she is fundamental, but her voice weighs extraordinarily little on health decisions.

Epilogue – Maryland

Maryland is a state built on stark contrasts:
extreme wealth and extreme poverty,
high-powered politics and abandoned neighborhoods,
brilliant careers and minimal jobs.

Women here experience all these contradictions simultaneously. Each area of Maryland has a different form of erasure: urban, social, identity-based, racial, and health-related.

Their absence is a collective result:
the State functions because they hold firm.

And that is precisely why they are not seen.

Reflection – Maryland

Each state reveals a nuanced account of women's absence.
Maryland reveals **the most complex:**
women exist at every social level yet are ignored precisely where the system takes shape.

Here, women are:
– the backbone of wealthy suburbs– the engine of black communities– the provider of healthcare– the survival of poor neighborhoods.

Yet, it is not recognized as a political force,
it is not placed at the center of strategies, it is not protected.

In Maryland, absence is not poverty or loneliness.
It is **disproportion:**
women give more than the state gives back.

And that is why it finds its place here in volume.

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts is one of the smartest states in America.
Elite universities, world-class hospitals, research centers, technology, and innovation. From the outside, it seems like one of

the most advanced and "right" places in the country: high education, high incomes, modern policies, and comprehensive services.

But the truth is more complex.

Massachusetts is a two-speed territory:
– those who belong to the circuits of knowledge – those who remain outside those doors.

It is a state that talks about progress,
but it lives under enormous cultural pressure. And that pressure slowly crushes the presence of women.

Women here do not disappear due to a lack of what they have.
They disappear due to **an excess of expectations:**
career, family, lofty standards, consistent performance, perfect social models.

The absence of women in Massachusetts is modern, cultured, refined—and devastating.

Elite University Woman – 33 years old

Massachusetts is the academic heart of the planet.
The future of knowledge is decided within those campuses.

The female researcher enters with extremely high capabilities, but finds herself faced with a system that demands:

– publish non-stop
– compete with protected colleagues – hold conferences, seminars, major events – maintain a consistently brilliant image – give up your private life for years

The context appears progressive, but the positions of power remain male.

Those who do research breathe an air of excellence... and attrition.

Her absence is institutional:
it produces knowledge, but rarely commands.

The Migrant Woman in Cleaning and Catering – 29 years old

Outside of its picture-perfect campuses, Massachusetts thrives on migrant labor:
Latinas, Haitians, Brazilians, Cape Verdeans, Africans.

They are the ones who:
– clean the offices of the elite
– cook in university restaurants
– work shifts in hotels – run the kitchens of Boston restaurants – care for the elderly – take care of other people's children.

Hard lives, low earnings, sky-high rents.

Her absence is economic and political:
it keeps the most educated city in America afloat without being recognized by anyone.

The Woman of Clinics and Hospitals – 41 years old

Massachusetts is the center of advanced healthcare.
Behind the big names are thousands of women: nurses, technicians, ward staff, assistants, and support staff.

Impossible shifts.
Constant stress. Enormous responsibilities. Difficult patients.
Extremely high living costs. Little rest.

Her absence is operational:
she is the engine of America's best healthcare, but the system does not see her as a person: only as a function.

The Woman from the Tough Neighborhoods – 35 years old

Beyond the affluent campuses and suburbs, Massachusetts has real, harsh poverty that is invisible to the media.

The woman who lives here faces:
– unaffordable rents – fragile schools – widespread violence – insufficient services – precarious transportation – low-paying jobs – structural racial discrimination.

She is an everyday survivor.

Her absence is urban:
she does not fit into the “perfect” narrative of Massachusetts, so the system ignores her.

Epilogue – Massachusetts

This state is an evident paradox:
the more cultured it is, the more it expects women to manage everything.

The absence here is not ignorance.
It is **hyper-excellence.**
It is the belief that, in an evolved territory, "everything will be fine."

Not everything is fine.

Women bear enormous and invisible burdens:
academic, health, family, economic.

Massachusetts works because they work.
And that is precisely why they disappear.

Reflection – Massachusetts

Each state displays a different wound.
Massachusetts displays the one hidden beneath its culture.

Here, women are not erased because they lack opportunities.
They are erased because they have too many, and no one protects them as they face them.

It is a modern erasure:
non-violent, non-noisy, non-obvious. But total.

And this is why Massachusetts is a necessary chapter:
to remember that progress is not enough if it does not truly liberate those who support it.

MICHIGAN

Michigan is the skeleton of industrial America.
The state that created the automobile, which built the very idea of the American working class—and that has seen it all fall apart.
Shuttered factories, emptied cities, abandoned neighborhoods, contaminated water, addictions, aging infrastructure, reduced wages.

It is a state that has experienced rise, decline, and resilience.
And through it all, women have endured what men could no longer sustain.

Michigan does not wipe out women all at once.
It consumes them, day after day, through three forces: –
collapsing industry
– **emptying cities**
– **environmental problems poisoning everything.**

The absence of women here is the result of a broken economy that continues to demand while giving almost nothing.

The Detroit Woman – 38 years old

Detroit is the global symbol of industrial collapse.
Empty neighborhoods, abandoned homes, fragile services, underfunded schools, and historic poverty.

Women here live with:
– precarious jobs – unreliable transportation – widespread violence – prohibitive costs – lack of solid social networks – total family responsibilities.

She works wherever she finds it:
supermarkets, clinics, call centers, restaurants, local cooperatives.

Her absence is urban:
a city famous throughout the world, but which does not look at those who keep it standing.

Detroit celebrates its industrial history.
It does not celebrate the women who survived its failure.

The Flint Woman – 34 years old

Flint is a national wound.
Water poisoned for years, children poisoned, families betrayed by the state.

The woman here experienced the scandal firsthand:
– she cooked with toxic water – she washed her children with dangerous water – she fought with institutions that denied the evidence – she ran homes with enormous sanitation problems – she had to choose between paying the bills or buying bottled water.

Her absence is environmental:
the State has failed, and it has paid the price.

Flint is not just a tragedy.
It is an example of how little the life of a poor woman matters in America.

The Woman of the Ex- Factories – 46 years old

Once upon a time, factories in Michigan provided stability:
fair wages, a home, a family, a future.

Then everything collapsed:
offshoring, robotization, closures, mass layoffs.

Women here had to reinvent themselves quickly:
– supermarkets – assistance – cleaning – small services – part-time jobs – split shifts.

From heavy industry to everyday precariousness.

Her absence is economic:
it has lost security, it has lost prospects, it has lost the protection it had when the car dominated the world.

Rural Woman – 50 years old

Rural Michigan is vast:
lake districts, forests, isolated communities, small, slow-moving towns.

The woman here faces:
– harsh winters – addictions that affect husbands and children – distant healthcare – seasonal jobs – loneliness – almost non-existent transportation.

It is a life of constant adjustment.
No support, no growth, no solid networks.

Her absence is geographical:
it disappears in the kilometers, in the silence, in the routine of survival.

Epilogue – Michigan

Michigan is a state that bears the scars of the past and the consequences of the present.

Women hold firm:
Detroit, Flint, rural areas, former factories, tough neighborhoods, resilient families.

But while they hold up, they disappear:
– amid collapsing infrastructures
– amid polluted waters
– amid precarious jobs – amid half-empty cities – amid failed economies.

Michigan celebrates its glorious past.
Women pay for the present.

Reflection – Michigan

Each state exhibits a different form of absence.
Michigan demonstrates the one caused by the **fragility of structures:**
when the factory falls, the community falls. And when the community falls, it is the woman who remains standing—alone.

The absence of women here is the result of a lifetime spent plugging away at
work, children, housing, economic crises, environmental disasters, cuts to services, and urban violence.

It is America that no longer works
and that expects women to work anyway.

And that is why this chapter is crucial.

MINNESOTA

Minnesota is a state that everyone likes:
lakes, nature, order, education, civilization, long winters, and a "quiet" life. This is what they see from the outside.

From the inside, it is different.
It's a state that lives half the year in freezing temperatures, with communities that seem open but are actually very closed, with cities that sell themselves as progressive but hide deep-seated racial tensions, with a social system that only works as long as you function—and women always function.

Here, the woman does not disappear into chaos.
She disappears into **apparent correctness.**
Into silence. Into coldness. Into the "gentle" expectations that crush her more than explicit violence.

Minnesota does not attack.
It consumes.

The Woman of the Immigrant Neighborhoods – 32 years old

Minnesota has one of the largest and most visible immigrant communities in the United States:
Somalis, Hmong, Ethiopians, and Latinos. And women are at the heart of these communities.

They live between two worlds:
– their culture of origin – the rigid and expensive American system.

They work as:
– healthcare assistants – cleaners – caterers – babysitters – drivers – cultural media workers.

They speak two languages, raise children, and support large families.
Nonstop.

Their absence is cultural and economic:
they are the driving force of communities, but society treats them as a service presence.

They are visible as numbers,
invisible as people.

The Woman Who Works in Social Work – 38 years old

Minnesota invests heavily in social services.
But those who do the real work are always women: in family centers, educational projects, shelters, and public facilities.

They call them "social angels."
They are underpaid and overworked workers.

Tough stories to bear,
constant emergencies, people to help without adequate tools,
constant emotional management.

Their absence is professional:
they support the most fragile part of society, but the system cannot support them.

The Woman of the Long Winters – 50 years

Minnesota in winter is like another planet:
months of snow, icy roads, forced isolation.

In inland areas and small towns, women live:
– kilometers away from everything – little health care – monotonous routine – domestic problems without support networks – winter that even gets into their heads.

When you are away, you are alone.
And when you are alone in Minnesota, no one sees.

Her absence is geographical:
she disappears into the snow, into the distance, into the silence.

Essential Sectors – 40 years old

Minnesota is a state that is based on three pillars:
– health care – education – food distribution.

Three sectors dominated by women.
Long shifts, elevated levels of responsibility, staff shortages, and constant stress.

They are the ones who keep the state functioning when temperatures drop to -25.
They are the ones who cannot be left out, even if they are sick.

Their absence is operational:
they cannot stop, but no one builds a system to protect them.

Epilogue – Minnesota

Minnesota is a state that is cold on the outside and warm on the outside.
Women keep everything in balance: immigrant communities, social services, healthcare, schools, and isolated families.

Their absence is made up of three elements:
– frost – silence – responsibility without recognition.

There is no chaos,
no noise, no spectacular violence. There is only a consuming calm.

Reflection – Minnesota

Every state displays its own form of absence.
Minnesota displays the “politest” one: erasure through apparent kindness.

Here they do not shout at you.
They do not openly obstruct you. They do not attack you.

They simply leave you to function alone.
And you must always function.

Minnesota is the state where women become invisible
not because they are weak, but because they are too strong to be helped.

And this is why this chapter is crucial:
to show that even “good” states have significant absences.

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi is the heart of the deepest South.
It is a state that still bears the weight of its history: slavery, entrenched poverty, segregation, lack of services, minimal infrastructure, underfunded education.

It is one of the places where being born a woman means starting out with three obstacles:
– inherited poverty – rigid family roles – a state that provides nothing.

Here, women do not disappear because of an event.
They disappear because they live in a society that **was never designed to protect them.**

The absence of women in Mississippi is total:
economic, cultural, health-related, political, racial.

It is the state where women hold everything
and receive nothing.

The African American Woman of the Delta – 40 years old

The Mississippi Delta is one of the poorest places in the United States.
Extraordinarily rich in culture, music, and history, yet ravaged by political neglect, lack of services, and enormous inequality.

The African American woman here is the linchpin of the community:
– she raises children and grandchildren – she works in fragile schools
– she provides family care
– she works shifts in retirement homes – she cleans houses and facilities – she supports the entire neighborhood.

Without her, the Delta would collapse in a day.

Her absence is historical and racial:
the State has never placed her at the center of anything. She gives everything, receives nothing.

The Woman of Rural Areas More Poverty – 48 years old

Rural Mississippi is vast.
Tiny towns, remote homes, churches everywhere, and almost nonexistent hospitals.

The woman lives with:
– miles away from everything – untreated chronic health problems – minimal transportation – seasonal or precarious jobs – old, difficult-to-maintain houses – a sense of isolation that becomes a way of life.

If an emergency happens,
no one arrives on time.

Her absence is geographical:
she lives too far away to be reached and too poor to be heard.

The Woman Who Works in the Lowest Services – 33 years old

Mississippi is one of the lowest-wage states in the country.
And these jobs, invariably, are for women.

The woman here works in:
– low-cost chains – low-cost supermarkets – fast-food restaurants – cleaning – informal care for the sick and elderly – unregistered babysitting.

Hard shifts, no rights, no stable hours.
She works hard, earns little, and survives.

Her absence is economic:
without her work, Mississippi stops slowly, but the state treats her as if anyone could replace her.

The Woman Trapped in Religious Tradition – 55 Years Old

Religion in Mississippi is not a factor.
It is a system.

The woman here must:
– be a mother – be devoted – be a family support – be a moral figure – be “strong” even when she is not.

She cannot separate without stigma.
She cannot change her life without triggering judgment. She cannot put herself before her family.

Her absence is cultural and emotional:
she was raised to support everyone, but no one supports her.

Epilogue – Mississippi

Mississippi is the slowest state to change.
And in this slowness, women are lost.

They are the ones who keep schools, shops, churches, families, and communities running.
They are the ones who hold together what the government cannot.

Yet, they disappear into a structure that never considers them central.

The absence here is not an accident.
It is a tradition.

Reflection – Mississippi

Every state displays a form of absence.
Mississippi displays the oldest and cruelest.

Here, women are not just invisible.
They are taken for **granted.**

They are considered a natural resource: always available, never protected.

Mississippi demonstrates a stark truth:
when history does not change, women pay the highest price.

This is why this chapter is one of the most important in the volume:
because it shows what remains when the State abandons entire generations and expects women to save them.