GILLETTE & L'ORÉAL,

WOMEN USA

VOL. IV

Missouri • Montana • Nebraska • Nevada
New Hampshire • New Jersey
New Mexico • New York



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

MISSOURI

Missouri is a state full of contradictions.
On one side, the calm Midwest; on the other, a South that has never stopped being tough. It is one of the most divided territories in America: St. Louis and Kansas City with tough neighborhoods, white suburbs that exist in a parallel world, poor and slow-moving countrysides, and a political system that talks a lot but solves little.

It is the state of normality that hides discomfort,
of the superficial smile that covers serious problems, and the "everything's fine" even when nothing is fine.

Women here do not disappear in an explosion.
They disappear under **constant pressure:**

family, work, tradition, poverty, underlying violence, a fragile healthcare system.

Missouri erases women with custom.
Everyone expects her to endure. And she endures until she disappears from herself.

The St. Louis Woman – 35 years old

St. Louis is a city that exists in two worlds:
one rich in history, the other trapped by violence, neglect, and racial inequality.

The woman here faces three problems simultaneously:
– dangerous neighborhoods – fragile schools – low wages.

It works in the city's essential networks:
– clinics – supermarkets – assistance – catering – basic education.

She holds up what the system cannot.
And while she holds up everything, no one holds her up.

Her absence is urban:
she has no say in the reconstruction of the city, even though she is the one managing every daily crisis.

The Woman of the “Perfect” Suburbs – 40 years old

Outside the big cities there are suburbs that seem impeccable:
clean streets, good schools, tidy houses.

The woman here is not poor,
but she is not free.

Must maintain:
– high family image – impeccable children – constant social presence – full agenda – “spotless” marriage – a standard of living that can never fall.

The pressure is silent and constant.
It cannot collapse. It cannot slow down. It cannot show fragility.

Her absence is mental:
she exists only as a role, not as a person.

Rural Woman – 49 years old

The Missouri countryside is slow, conservative, and closed. Homes are far apart, services are minimal, and traditions are heavy.

Women here live in a world that changes extraordinarily little:
– precarious jobs – poor access to healthcare – large families – widespread addictions – churches that control social life – little possibility of breaking out of the role.

It is a life of obligations without choices.
If you have a problem, you manage it yourself. If you collapse, no one notices.

Her absence is geographical and cultural:
it disappears into distance and tradition.

The Woman of Industry and Manual Labor – 37 years old

Missouri has a huge presence of medium-sized industries: warehouses, coordination, assembly lines, manufacturing plants.

Women here do heavy physical work:
– packaging – production lines – night shifts – handling – quality control – coordination assistance.

Worn-out bodies, low earnings, impossible hours.
It is work that the state needs, but it is completely invisible.

Her absence is physical:
she breaks and has no one to intervene.

Epilogue – Missouri

Missouri is a state that thrives on apparent normality.
And in normality, women lose themselves.

It governs difficult neighborhoods,
hyper-social suburbs, tough factories, slow-moving countryside.

Every day is a quiet battle.
And quiet battles are the most destructive.

Missouri does not wipe out women with a single blow.
It wipes them out with habits that no one ever questions.

Reflection – Missouri

Each state in the volume displays a type of absence.
Missouri displays the "silent" one: the one born of routine, social expectations, the strain of having to be everything to everyone.

Here, women are the invisible glue that holds every social class together.
They are everywhere. And that is precisely why no one sees them.

Missouri teaches that erasure does not require hatred or conflict.
It just requires an entire society to assume that women will always be there.

And this is why this chapter is fundamental:
to remember that normality, if not supported, becomes a trap.

MONTANA

Montana is pure immensity:
enormous mountains, endless roads, endless forests, isolated

houses, skin-slicing winters. It is one of the most beautiful states in the USA. And one of the hardest to live in.

Here, women do not disappear because of conflict.
They disappear because of **geography, isolation, a rural mentality,** and **emotional loneliness.**
It is a state where silence weighs more than noise.

Montana demands resistance.
And women are the ones who must resist for everyone.

The Woman of the Backwaters – 51 years old

Here you can live 30 km from the nearest store.
An hour from the nearest clinic. Two hours from a real hospital.

Women living in these areas face:
– extreme cold – no immediate help – ignored health problems – old houses to maintain – total family responsibility – concrete fear of being stranded.

Her absence is geographical:
it disappears because it lives where nothing reaches.

The Ranch Families Woman – 39 years old

Montana thrives on livestock farming.
Cattle, horses, large animals, and physical labor.

The woman here does everything:
– helps with the animals – cooks for everyone – manages the accounts – drives vehicles – deals with emergencies – raises children in the middle of nowhere.

She works like a man,
but is considered “a familiar presence.”

Her absence is economic:
it produces value, but it does not appear in anything.

The Woman of Small Towns – 44 years old

In the small towns of Montana, time stands still.
Communities are small, everyone knows everyone, and no one changes.

A woman must:
– be a mother – be dependable – not “cause scandal” – be devoted – always be available.

It cannot reinvent itself.
It cannot transcend its cultural boundaries. It cannot express fragility.

Her absence is social:
she does not belong to herself, but to the community.

The Woman Who Works in Nature Tourism – 33 years old

Montana attracts tourists for its parks, lakes, and nearby Yellowstone.
Behind the postcards are women running hotels, restaurants, outdoor activities, maintenance, coordination, and cleaning.

Hard shifts, seasonal wages, life in remote areas.
No stability.

Her absence is economic:
the sector lives on her, but she never lives peacefully.

Epilogue – Montana

Montana is a blend of stunning nature and fierce solitude.
Women here disappear into the distance: physical, emotional, and cultural.

They are the ones who hold together isolated homes, ranches, families, small towns, and tourism.
And while they hold together, no one watches.

Reflection – Montana

Each state in the volume displays a form of absence.
Montana displays the one produced by **all-consuming geography.**

Here, women are not erased by violence or extreme poverty.
They are erased by miles of nothingness, by isolating winters, by an unchanging culture, by a role they cannot refuse.

It is a slow, silent erasure.
One of the hardest to recognize precisely because it makes no noise.

NEBRASKA

Nebraska is open, linear, flat land.
Vast fields, constant wind, endless skies. From the outside: calm.
From the inside: isolation, slowness, conservative communities, hard farmwork, and very few opportunities.

It is a state that lives halfway between the Midwest and the West, but without the strengths of either.

Here, women do not disappear because of chaos.
They disappear because of **burdensome normality,**
because of **agricultural routine,**
because of **unchanging roles,**
because of **geographical solitude.**

Nebraska makes no noise,
but it consumes.

The Farm Woman – 40 years old

The Nebraska woman is an integral part of the farm:
– waking up at dawn – animals to manage – meals for everyone – family accounting – crops to follow – house maintenance – children to raise – sudden emergencies.

She works as much as men, often more.
But she is listed as "unemployed."

Her absence is economic:
it produces value, but it does not exist in the data.

The Woman of Small Towns – 46 years old

Countries of a few thousand people,
where everyone knows everything about everyone.

The woman must be:
– a present mother – a stable wife – a respectable figure – active in the church – a supporter of the community.

She cannot afford shortcuts, crises, or sudden changes.
She lives within a fixed role, decided by others.

Her absence is cultural:
she has a place, but not a voice.

The Woman Who Works in Light Services – 32 years old

In the cities of Nebraska — Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island — women do the daily work:

– cashiers
– cleaning – catering – school assistance – retirement homes – secretarial

Low wages, split shifts, no prospects.

Her absence is social:
without it the city does not function, but nobody mentions it when talking about "development".

The Woman of Distances – 53 years old

Nebraska is a state where you can drive for two hours without seeing a real town.
This distance becomes a way of life.

The woman who lives outside the cities faces:
– long journeys for every need – little medical care – harsh winters – isolated houses
– monotonous routine
– no real social network.

Her absence is geographical:
it disappears in the kilometers.

Epilogue – Nebraska

Nebraska is a land that seems simple,
but simplicity is only superficial.

Women here disappear into:
– unpaid agricultural work – closed communities – extreme distances – lack of services – rigid roles.

It is an absence made of land, tradition, and silence.

Reflection – Nebraska

Every state exhibits a form of absence.
Nebraska exhibits the one constructed by **daily life that never changes.**

There is no obvious violence,
no spectacular crisis. There is only a life that repeats itself, a toil that goes unrecognized, a role that cannot be abandoned.

Nebraska is the state where women hold everything together
and for this very reason they are not seen.

And that is why it deserves this chapter:
because the most common deletion is the one that seems normal.

NEVADA

Nevada is a state built on appearances.
Light, casinos, hotels, entertainment, tourism, gambling, endless nightlife. A showcase that the world perceives as freedom, excess, and possibility.

The truth is the opposite.

Nevada is one of the places where the female body is most easily used, exploited, consumed, and replaced.
A place where women disappear not because of a lack of opportunity, but because their presence is treated like a commodity.

The female absence here is modern, lucid, and intentional.
An elegant, continuous, and clean erasure. Made up of impossible hours, night shifts, aesthetic pressure, a worn-out identity, and roles imposed by the tourism industry.

The Lady of Casinos and Hotels – 33 years old

Las Vegas thrives only because thousands of women run:
– reception – housekeeping – restaurants – bars – entertainment – customer service – coordination – tourist call centers.

Night shifts, canceled weekends, non-existent holidays, constant pressure.
Women must maintain a perfect image, even when they have no energy left inside.

Her absence is physical and psychological:
she works in a system that uses her as “part of the experience,” not as a person.

The Woman Who Works in the Night Sector – 29 years old

Nevada at night is not glamorous.
It is harsh. Among the lights, music, and spectacles, lives are consumed:

– hostesses
– dancers – bartenders – promoters – roles related to image and aesthetic presence

Your body is part of the contract.
If you cannot manage it, they will replace you in a minute.

Her absence is economic and moral:
work demands her image, not her person.

The Immigrant Woman Who Runs Backstage – 41 Years Old

Behind the mega-hotels are hundreds of immigrant women: Filipino, Mexican, Haitian, Central American.

They are the ones who do everything that the tourists should not see work:

– industrial laundries
– continuous cleaning – underground kitchens – huge warehouses
– evening coordination – floor preparation

Hidden lives.
Tired bodies. Inhuman shifts.

Her absence is systemic:
it is essential but treated as invisible.

The Woman Who Lives Outside Las Vegas – 52 years old

Nevada is not just lights.
It is also the surrounding desert: small towns, low-rise houses, sparse services, isolated industries.

Women here face:
– prohibitive costs – limited healthcare – lack of transportation – enormous distances – harsh, poorly connected communities – limited opportunities.

She leads a life opposite to that which the world associates with the State.

Her absence is geographical:
she lives not in the Nevada of lights, but in the real Nevada.

Nobody talks about her.

Epilogue – Nevada

Nevada is a state built on performance.
It is all about image, experience, and entertainment.

Women are the silent engine that makes this machine turn:
hotels, casinos, restaurants, entertainment, maintenance, coordination.

Yet, they are the least valued.
They are the ones who sustain the dreams of others while living a harsh, consuming, and invisible reality.

Nevada deletes them exactly as it uses them.

Reflection – Nevada

Every state displays a face of absence.
Nevada displays the most modern one: women reduced to economic functions.

It is not poverty that erases it.
It is the system.

It is a constructed absence:
silent, elegant, disguised as opportunity. Women have a thousand possibilities, but there are a thousand ways to consume them.

And this is why this chapter is crucial:
because amidst the lights, it is less visible who turns them on every day.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire has freedom, woods, lakes, hills, perfect villages, quiet roads, and almost zero taxes.
From the outside, it looks like a minimalist paradise: no chaos, no noise, no huge cities. Just order and nature.

The problem is that total freedom often means **total loneliness.**
And when the state underinvests in public services, the burden falls squarely on people—primarily, women.

Here, the absence of women is not a tragedy.
It is **isolation, rigid cultural customs, family pressure, and a lack of real social networks.**

New Hampshire does not attack.
It leaves you alone.

The Little Woman Community – 47 years

In the villages of New Hampshire, everything seems calm.
Everything is closed.

The woman must be:
– a dependable mother – a respected social figure – a volunteer in schools – present in the community – a “good person” according to local codes.

She cannot make mistakes.
She cannot go too far outside the norm. She cannot afford emotional crises.

Her absence is cultural:
it has a role, but not freedom.

The Woman Who Lives in the Cold and Distance – 52 years old

New Hampshire is not big,
but it is full of isolated areas, houses far apart, and roads that become obstacles in the winter.

The woman here lives with:
– months of snow – distances that complicate everything – health problems treated late – mental isolation – domestic routine that leaves no room – little local health care.

If she falls, she waits.
If she is sick, she drives for miles. If she collapses emotionally, no one notices.

Her absence is geographical:
she disappears into the silence and the cold.

Essential Jobs – 38 years old

In medium-sized cities—Concord, Manchester, Nashua—
women run the basic services:

– schools
– clinics – care for the elderly – public offices – primary education – administrative services

Low salaries, responsibilities much greater than the salary,
constant emotional burdens.

Her absence is operational:
it holds together what remains of the welfare system, but the State invests little in its sectors.

It is essential,
but exhausting.

The Woman Who Works Low-Paid Jobs in Tourist Areas – 33 Years Old

The northern part of the state lives on tourism:
foliage, lakes, mountains, winter.

Behind the perfect images there are women who:
– clean facilities – prepare breakfasts – work in restaurants – manage B&Bs – tidy up rooms – do minimal maintenance.

Busy seasons and empty seasons.
An unstable economy. Zero real protection.

Her absence is economic:
everything works on her, but the system considers her replaceable.

Epilogue – New Hampshire

New Hampshire is orderly and quiet.
And that is precisely why the woman disappears without a sound.

It disappears between:
– traditional roles – closed communities – physical distance – endless winter – insufficient services – underpaid essential jobs.

There is no fuss.
There is no chaos. Only a solitude that becomes the norm.

Reflection – New Hampshire

Every state demonstrates a different form of absence.
New Hampshire demonstrates the "perfect" one: a polite, clean, and orderly cancellation.

Here the woman governs the communities,
but has no communities to govern her.

It is the New England paradox:
the more civilized you are, the more you expect the woman to figure everything out on her own.

And that is why this chapter is necessary:
to remind us that even seemingly "good" states can be terrible to live in.

NEW JERSEY

New Jersey is a frontier territory:
connected, frenetic, expensive, overloaded with commuters, full of mixed families, immigrants, tough neighborhoods, expensive suburbs, and forgotten cities.

This is not the New York "across the bridge."
It is a complex, fragmented state, where women govern a system that consumes more than it gives back.

The absence of women here stems from five very harsh elements: – extremely prohibitive cost of living – invisible domestic work – exhausting commuting – multi-ethnic communities with real tensions – traditional family roles that resist.

New Jersey does not erase women with violence.
It erases them with **the effort of existing among a thousand functions.**

The Commuter Woman – 36 years old

New Jersey is a commuter state.
Hours are wasted every day getting to New York or Philadelphia: delayed trains, unmanageable traffic, high transportation costs, and extremely late returns.

The woman who lives this life lives “halfway”:
– half at work – half on public transport – half at home (which ironically takes up more than half of the family burden)

Her absence is temporal:
she has no time for herself. She has no time for anything.

It exists in the clippings.

Immigrant Woman of the Services – 42 years old

(Latina, Haitian, African, Filipino)

New Jersey thrives on immigrant power.
The woman here holds the stage for the entire state:

– cleaning in the homes of the wealthy
– unregulated babysitting – restaurant kitchens – nursing homes – maintenance – low-wage basic services

She faces three problems at the same time:
– low wages – extremely high rents – enormous family responsibilities.

Her absence is economic and linguistic:
she works, speaks, adapts, but remains on the margins of the system.

It is indispensable,
yet always replaceable.

The Woman from the Tough Neighborhoods – 34 years old

New Jersey is not just affluent arrogance.
It has some of the most troubled cities in the East:

– urban violence
– underfunded schools – unemployment – fragile healthcare – lack of real community services

The woman who lives here faces:
– constant insecurity – precarious jobs – inefficient transportation
– cost of living not proportionate to wages.

She is the pillar of single-parent families,
the backbone of social networks, the figure who saves everything when no one saves her.

Her absence is urban and structural:
no one listens to it when the system fails.

The Woman of Pride Rich – 45 years old

The other side of New Jersey is its affluent suburbs:
huge houses, excellent schools, tidy neighborhoods.

Women here live under constant pressure:
– a full family schedule – children's activities – forced volunteering – impeccable social image – marriage established as a status symbol – extremely lofty expectations.

She cannot appear fragile.
She cannot fail. She cannot interrupt the performance.

Her absence is an identity issue:
it is seen as a family function, not as an individual.

Epilogue – New Jersey

New Jersey is a state that lives too fast and too expensively.
Women are the ones who truly run it, but the system erases them while using them.

– commuting
– invisible jobs – insufficient services – dangerous neighborhoods – hyper-competitive suburbs – rigid family roles – multiculturalism without real support

The state functions thanks to them,
but never looks at their efforts.

Reflection – New Jersey

Every state exhibits some form of absence.
New Jersey demonstrates the kind that arises from **a system that expects too much and gives too little back.**

It is the state of intermediation:
too close to the centers of power, too distant from their opportunities.

Here, women live in a constant state of compression:
of time, of money, of energy, of identity.

It is not the fault of a single factor.
It is the sum of them all.

And this is precisely what makes New Jersey central to the volume:
it shows how feminine absence can arise from a full life—full of everything except space for oneself.

NEW MEXICO

New Mexico is one of the most fascinating and challenging states in America.
Pure beauty: vast deserts, red canyons, native communities, ancient culture, spirituality, silence. But behind this powerful aesthetic lies a much harsher reality:

– historical poverty
– chronic addictions – weak public services – geographic isolation – fragile schools – hidden domestic violence – cross-border drug trafficking

It is a state where women do not disappear by chance:
they disappear because they live in a territory where everything weighs—distance, history, culture, poverty, closed communities, precarious jobs.

New Mexico is abandoned beauty.
And within that abandonment are the women who hold it all together.

The Native Woman of the Pueblos – 43 years old

New Mexico has one of the largest Native American populations in the Americas:
Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache women.

She lives between two worlds:
– ancient traditions – modern state that ignores her.

It faces:
– underfunded schools– minimal healthcare– overcrowded housing– low wages– limited access to basic services– cultural and geographical isolation.

It supports large families, entire communities, and heavy responsibilities.

Her absence is historic:
over the last hundred years, the State has taken everything from its people and given almost nothing back.

The Latina Woman from the Poor Areas – 35 years old

New Mexico is more Latino than American.
Spanish is everywhere, mixed families, and hard work.

Latina women are everywhere in the backstage of the state:
– cleaning – catering – assistance – light agriculture – local shops – community support.

They live on extremely low wages and rising costs.
Many families live on the edge. Without documents, the situation is even more fragile: fear, invisibility, no real help.

Her absence is economic and political:
she works hard but is never represented.

The Woman Who Lives Far from Everything – 52 years old

New Mexico is huge, but empty.
Tiny towns, houses in the desert, cities hours apart.

The woman here faces:
– total loneliness – distant healthcare – zero transportation – harsh winters, relentless summers – unchanging routine – little work – widespread addictions around.

If she falls, no one comes.
If she needs a doctor, she drives for hours. If she has problems, she takes care of them herself.

Her absence is geographical:
it disappears into space.

The Woman Who Works in The Sector Tourist-Spiritual – 30 years

New Mexico attracts “spiritual” tourism:
art, meditation, deserts, retreats, native culture.

Behind the poetic image there are women who support the economy:
– B&Bs– cultural guides– galleries– small restaurants– artisan shops–
seasonal services.

It is a volatile sector:
excellent earnings in high season, almost nothing in the other months.

Her absence is economic:
the beauty of the area attracts money but does not retain it for those who live there.

Epilogue – New Mexico

New Mexico is a state that exists between two extremes:
absolute beauty and chronic poverty. Deep spirituality and political neglect. Strong tradition and weak services.

The women here carry everything on their shoulders:
Native communities, Latino families, isolated deserts, cities of art, minimal jobs.

And while they support the state,
no one supports them.

It is an absence that makes no noise because the landscape is too beautiful.
And beauty covers everything.

Reflection – New Mexico

Each state exhibits a different form of absence.
New Mexico exhibits the one created by **distance** and **unresolved history.**

Here, the woman is not erased by a single force.
She is erased by everything together:

– geography
– culture – tradition – poverty – isolation – family roles – lack of services – political invisibility

It is an ancient deletion.
Almost hereditary.

And that is why this chapter is crucial:
because New Mexico is not a place forgotten by time.
It is a place forgotten by the state.
And women pay for it every day.

NEW YORK STATE

New York is not a city.
It has an impact on the body. It is a wave that grabs you and drags you along even if you do not want it to. It is a presence that does not ask for permission. You walk in here and you immediately understand that you do not decide what it decides.

It is the only place in the world where you can be surrounded by millions of people and still feel more alone than in a desert.
It is a city that watches you, measures you, evaluates you, consumes you, and if you cannot keep up with the pace, it leaves you behind without looking back.

New York does not welcome you.
It evaluates you.

It is the capital of the world, but also the capital of the invisible.
The city that only shows the winners, forgetting the thousands of women who make every inch of it work.
Those who support the lives of others while no one supports her.

New York is everything at once:
violently flaunted wealth and poverty that no longer has a voice, neighborhoods that change face in five years and neighborhoods that haven't changed in fifty, languages that mix, cultures that overlap, bodies that intersect, lives that never truly speak to each other.

It's a city built on constant movement:
hopping on and off crowded trains, walking dirty, bright streets, looking for a job that keeps you afloat,
rushing to deliver orders,
moving to the clinic, to school, to home, to work shifts, in a thousand different directions.

It is a territory that promises you a lot,
but only gives you what you tear.

New York works thanks to the women who hold together the pieces that others ignore:
those who work on the top floors of skyscrapers, those who clean the floors on the lower floors, those who raise the children of families who don't have time, those who survive in neighborhoods no one wants to look at, those who face a city that asks everything of you and always leaves you half-finished.

Here the woman experiences three levels of pressure simultaneously:

1. **The pressure of pace:**
   if you slow down, you disappear. New York waits for no one and makes no exceptions for you.

2. **Cost pressure:**
   everything here costs too much—home, time, energy, identity. And every day becomes a financial challenge.

3. **The pressure of presence:**
   you always must be there, you must resist, you must function, you must hold up.

But who supports you?

New York is beautiful and cruel:
it gives you real opportunities, but it asks for an extremely high price.

The woman here is not a weak presence.
She is a daily survival machine.

It is she who carries forward the schools, hospitals, restaurants, cleaning, public services, transportation, families, skyscrapers, businesses, and neighborhoods.

Yet, **in the story of the city,**
its voice is not central. It is background. It is functional. It is necessary but not celebrated. Present, but not heard.

New York is the city that puts everything on display,
except those who really make it run.

And that is precisely why it occupies a different place in this volume.
It is not a state like any other. It is the point where all of America's female absences converge: the economic, the cultural, the urban, the linguistic, the racial, the professional, and the emotional.

It is the microcosm of everything that works and everything that does not.

Here, women are everywhere.
Yet they can disappear in a second. All it takes is for their pace to slow down that of the city.

New York is big,
but not big enough to contain the weight of a woman's life. And this chapter proves it: the most famous city in the world is not the most just. It is just the most visible. And in the immense noise of her daily life, the woman is lost in silence.

Manhattan

Olivia, 39 – Midtown, high-rise offices, and a busy lifestyle

Olivia takes the subway at 7:10.
Line 6, standing, phone in hand, eyes already focused on the flow of emails.

She works on the twenty-seventh floor of a glass building in Midtown.
She is a project manager for a company that sells services that no one can really explain. Everyone talks about numbers, forecasts, quarterly goals. No one talks about people.

Olivia has a six-year-old daughter who stays awake for two hours a day.
In the morning, to get her dressed, in the evening to put her to bed. The rest are delegated: babysitting, school, after-school activities, quick texts.

Her boss asks her for “flexibility,” but flexibility is always one-sided:
– meetings that get longer – calls that go off schedule
– invented emergencies
– projects that need to be finished “by tonight.”

Manhattan is sold as the city of opportunity.
For Olivia, it is a city that steals her time and sells it to her in the form of home deliveries, laundry, and paid service.

In the evening, when she leaves the office, the lights of the buildings seem like a mockery.
Everything sparkles, except her life.

Olivia's absence is not cheap.
It is **time-consuming.**
She is present everywhere except where it matters most.

I, Nando, when I watch her cross 3rd Avenue with the rapid pace of someone who cannot afford to slow down, I see one simple

thing:
a woman who holds up a city that will never hold up her.

— Nando

Brooklyn

Aisha, 31 – Bedford-Stuyvesant, gentrification in reverse

Aisha was born in Bed-Stuy, a historically black neighborhood. Rap, history, families, churches, and summer sidewalk barbecues.

Then came the "artists," the investors, the new coffee shops, the purebred dogs on leashes, and the prices rising incoherently.
The usual scenario.

Aisha works at a local public school.
Her students come from families facing eviction every year.
Many of her childhood classmates no longer live there, having been pushed out by "redevelopment" projects.

She teaches, listens, manages conflicts, protects.
By day, she is a teacher, psychologist, big sister, and protective wall. By night, she grades homework sitting at the table in a rented kitchen, anxious that one day she will not be able to afford that house anymore.

The city celebrates Brooklyn as "cool."
Aisha has no time to be "cool": she must survive.

Its absence is urban and political:
the neighborhood everyone speculates about, the only one that is not truly listened to.

— Nando

Queens

María Fernanda, 42 – Jackson Heights, three worlds in one body

María Fernanda is from Ecuador.
She lives in Jackson Heights, Queens: the place where ten different languages are spoken in one block, and none of them is the language of power.

She works cleaning offices in Manhattan at night
and babysitting during the day, when needed. Sleep is a luxury by the hour.

She has two children: one born in Quito, one born in New York. The older one asks her why she is never home. The younger one assumes his mother is always in a rush.

María sends money to her mother, who remained in Ecuador.
She supports two continents. With one body.

Her life is a constant commute:
Queens → Manhattan → Queens. Slow trains, heavy bags, tired legs.

No one really sees her.
To the parents of the American girl she cares for, she is "Mary."
To her cleaning colleagues, she is "the lady who never stops."

Its absence is linguistic and social:
it makes the New York that works function, but it does not belong to any official narrative.

I, Nando, meet her one Sunday morning on Roosevelt Avenue and the only thing I think is:
this country is standing only because women like her do not let it fall.

— Nando

Bronx

Keisha, 29 – South Bronx, daily resistance

Keisha lives in the South Bronx.
Weathered buildings, frequent sirens, low-cost stores, children playing on broken sidewalks.

She is raising two children alone.
Their father disappeared amid promises and apologies years ago.

She works in a supermarket, evening shift:
– fast checkout – nervous customers
– managers who check every minute
– pay that is never enough.

During the day, she runs around:
– taking her children to school – talking to the teachers – arguing with the office that manages the subsidies – doing the shopping, counting every dollar.

She has no time to think about herself.
She only knows she must keep those two children on their feet.

The Bronx is still portrayed as a problem.
Keisha is the solution no one recognizes: the mother who holds up a neighborhood that politicians only use as a backdrop.

Its absence is structural:
it is at the center of everything that happens, but for the system it does not exist.

— Nando

Staten Island

Gina, 45 – invisible commuter between two cities

Gina lives in Staten Island.
She works in an insurance office in Manhattan. Every day, it is the same routine:

– bus
– ferry – metro – office – and then everything back to the beginning.

For Manhattanites, Staten Island barely exists.
A map nipple, the bottom of the pile. For Gina, however, it is home. But it is also a cage.

She would like to change jobs, but any serious opportunity is far away.
She would like more time for her children, but she gives it away to transportation. She would like not to be tired every evening, but the city does not treat those who live on its fringes kindly.

Her absence is both temporal and spatial:
she lives in a place that isolates her, she works in a place that uses her.

I, Nando, imagine her standing on the ferry, cup of coffee in hand, her eyes lost in the skyline.
New York in front of her. Her life is in the middle.

— Nando

Wall Street

Rachel, 37 – the woman who cannot break down.

Rachel works in the financial sector.
She does not have the luxury of being mediocre. Not in that environment. Not as a woman.

She learned to speak faster, to never make a mistake in tone, to never show hesitation.

No one forgives you for a breakdown, but a woman's is marked for life.

Days are machines:
numbers, graphs, calls, meetings, chain emails, business dinners, decisions made too hastily with consequences too great.

When she comes home, she is empty.
Not sad: **empty.**
She has no energy to build anything outside of work. Half-baked relationships, broken friendships, distant family.

New York applauds women's success on Wall Street at conferences, empowerment events, and panels.
Then, as soon as the microphone goes off, everything goes back to normal.

Her absence is emotional:
she is present in every room where decisions are made, but she had to give up a part of himself sitting there.

This story has no morals.
It just has an open score.

— Nando

Nanny Latina

Dolores, 54 – Upper East Side, raises other people's children.

Dolores comes from Mexico.
She has lived in New York for twenty years. For twenty years, she has been moving into homes that will never be hers.

She works on the Upper East Side, among enormous apartments, doormen, silent elevators, and kitchens bigger than her entire one-bedroom apartment in Queens.

She raised four children in a family that considers her "almost family."
"Almost."
A word that says it all.

She saw them take their first steps, listen to their cries, dried their tears, prepared snacks, accompanied them to school, filmed their afternoons, heard their confessions.

When those children grow up, they leave.
Dolores stays.

She comes home late that evening.
Her biological son, now grown, still harbors a certain respect for her, mixed with resentment: he saw little of her as a child. She was busy mothering others.

Her absence is twofold:
a mother present in the lives of others, a mother absent from her own family.

And America sums it all up with one phrase:
“It’s the job.”

— Nando

Homeless Woman

Monique, 51 – Midtown, invisible among millions

Monique sleeps wherever she can.
Sometimes in a shelter, sometimes on a piece of cardboard in front of a closed shop window, sometimes on a chair in some subway station.

Once upon a time, she had a house, a partner, a job.
Then the usual spiral: illness, debt, job loss, mental breakdown, no one to hold on to.

She is black, over fifty, and has a body she carries every winter she spends on the streets.

In the morning, while the city rushes to work, she is there.
Same street, same corner, same gaze that no one wants to meet.

Her absence is total:
for the system she is no longer anything. Not a worker, not a consumer, not "useful". Therefore, she does not exist.

I, Nando, every time I see a woman on the street in New York, I ask myself the same blunt question:
how many steps did the State have to skip for her to end up here?

The answer is always the same: too many. Nando

Great Hospital

Sofia, 34 years old – nurse between two shifts and no breathing

Sofia enters the hospital when many are still asleep.
The shift is from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. If all goes well. Because in some departments, "if all goes well" does not exist.

She works in a large Manhattan hospital.
Endless corridors, neon lights, alarms, monitors, broken voices, bodies hooked up to machines, relatives asking questions, doctors rushing by.

Sofia cannot afford to collapse.
Every action has consequences. Every distraction weighs heavily.

At the end of her shift, she still has:
– stories that do not end – looks she does not forget – news she had to whisper – responsibilities that no one can take away from her.

Outside the hospital, New York runs as if nothing were happening.
Inside, she holds up the most fragile part of the city.

Her absence is both emotional and institutional:
she is at the heart of the healthcare system, but her voice does not count as much as her resistance.

I, Nando, watching these women in uniform emerge exhausted from a shift, understand one simple thing:
if one day they all decided to stop together, the city would collapse in 48 hours.

— Nando

Restaurants

Giulia, 27 – Lower East Side, plates, tables, and compressed dignity

Giulia is Italian American, but from the New York that true Italians no longer know.
Not picture-postcard Little Italy, but endless shifts at a restaurant on the Lower East Side.

She is a waitress, but she does much more:
– improvised psychologist – lightning rod for nervous customers – buffer between kitchen and dining room – aesthetic presence to show off – body always upright, smile always on

Tips decide whether the week is a living or a respite.
The base salary is ridiculous, as always in the industry.

At the end of the evening, they ask her the stupidest question of all:
“And what do you really do for a living?”

As if that was not "really" work.

Her absence is social:
everyone needs her when they are hungry, no one considers her when it comes to rights.

I, Nando, have more respect for a woman who can manage an eight-hour shift in the dining room than for someone sitting at a table who thinks he is worth more just because he pays.

— Nando

Creative Industry

Leah, 36 – Brooklyn, a creative who can never turn off her brain.

Leah works as a writer and producer at a production company in Brooklyn and Manhattan.
Series, campaigns, content. Always something to invent, always someone to convince, always a ridiculous deadline.

At a new project launch party, everyone talks about "vision," "storytelling," and "new narratives."
No one talks about the sleepless nights, the endless revisions, the stolen ideas, or the burnout disguised as "passion for the work."

Leah lives in a shared apartment in Bushwick.
She might have "made her career," but the city's cost eats away at any advancement.

Her absence is professional:
New York sells creativity as freedom, but its creativity is tied to budgets, calls, absurd requests, constant pressure.

She produces imagination.
Others monetize it.

— Nando

Freelance in Pieces

Priya, 33 – three jobs, zero security

Priya was born in Queens to Indian parents.
She is educated and has a head full of ideas, but the New York job market has handed her a clear package:
freelance for life.

She does graphic design for agencies that call her an "external collaborator",
writes content for brands that never mention her,
and occasionally teaches short courses on how to raise rent.

She has no vacation, no sick leave, no bonus pays, nothing guaranteed.
She only has responsibilities.

By day, she delivers jobs.
By night, she checks her emails, hoping she does not get yet another "we need a miracle by tomorrow."

The city likes to say, "Here, if you're talented, you can make it."
But the truth is different: here, if you have talent, they will squeeze you into until you are nothing left.

Its absence is contractual:
it manages pieces of communication, campaigns, and projects, but on paper it is always "outsourced".

I, Nando, clearly see the catch in the face of a person like you:
full work, empty life.

— Nando

Public Housing

Tanya, 44 – East Harlem, mother, caretaker, target

Tanya lives in a public housing complex in East Harlem.
The buildings are old, poorly maintained, the elevators break down frequently, and the stairs are worn.

She is a mother of three.
She works as an assistant at a local school. She pays low rent, but the original price is something else: living in a place the state no longer considers its own.

Every day is divided between:
– work – school meetings – neighbors to help – bureaucracy for subsidies – anxiety for children growing up in a complicated environment – noises of arguments, police, sirens.

Her absence is political:
her neighborhood exists only when a photo is needed to talk about "social problems."

In the meantime, the one keeping it alive is her, and women like her, who function as a wall against everything.

New York talks about development, regeneration, and investment.
But when you climb the stairs of certain buildings, you realize that many have been abandoned for years.

— Nando

Domestic Violence

Rosa, 38, Queens, trapped between fear and documents.

Rosa is from the Dominican Republic.
She lives in a shared apartment in a never-ending stretch of Queens.

She has a husband who works intermittently and who alternates: days when he apologizes, days when he yells, days when he pushes, days when he hits.

Rosa does not leave for three reasons:
– she is afraid – she does not have money – she is afraid of losing her permit to stay in the country.

At night, when he is asleep, she pretends nothing is happening.
In the morning, she puts on makeup to cover bruises and goes to work at a laundromat.

The system tells her:
“Call, ask for help, get out.” But the reality is dirtier: full shelters, waiting lists, overburdened social workers, little real protection.

Her absence is legal:
she is trapped in a void of laws, documents, fear, and a lack of alternatives.

I, Nando, am watching from the outside and I know that the phrase “if he wants to, he can go away” is one of the most false and cowardly this world has ever invented.

— Nando

Ultra-Orthodox Neighborhoods

Chaya, 29 – Borough Park, life defined before birth.

Chaya lives in Borough Park, Brooklyn.
An ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhood. Strict rules, a closed community, assigned roles.

Her life was decided before she could even have an opinion:
– incredibly young marriage – many children – no real autonomy
– religious study at the center – outside world seen as a threat.

Her day is full:
house, children, shopping, cooking, rituals, constant requests.
Never a moment of true silence, never a space just for her.

Chaya has thoughts she cannot express.
Questions she cannot ask. Suspicions of what might be out there, but no map to get there.

Her absence is cultural and spiritual:
she is present in every gesture of her world, but she cannot exist as an individual separate from the structure.

New York applauds diversity,
but is happy to accept that some women live in “invisible” cultural cages if they do not disturb others.

— Nando

Nali Salon

Li Mei, 41 – Flushing, perfect hands, life consumed

Li Mei works at a nail salon in Flushing, Queens.
Client after client, nail after nail, smelling of nail polish remover, wearing a mask, hunched back.

She arrived from China over ten years ago.
She found work immediately: cash, long shifts, few questions asked.

She works six days a week, ten hours a day.
Sometimes more than that.

For customers, it is an accessory of the place:
"the lady who does nails well and in silence."

No one asks themselves:
– how much money they have left in their pocket – how often they breathe chemicals – whether they have health insurance – whether they can sleep at night without pain.

Its absence is chemical and social:
it slowly wears away under neon lights,
making other people's hands beautiful,
while no one notices how theirs are.

I, Nando, imagine her closing the shop in the evening and counting the money.
Not the profit: the margin. The difference between staying afloat or sinking a little deeper.

— Nando

Woman of the Night

Jasmine, 28 – Times Teams, bright lights, fragile life

Jasmine works in clubs that live after midnight.
She does not dance to art. She dances to survive.

It works long shifts, dark corridors, managers who smile too much, customers who confuse service with entitlement.

She learned ten rules that are not written anywhere:
– smile – do not trust – do not stay alone – do not drink what they offer you – don't show fear – keep your eyes open – don't make friends – don't believe any promises – don't stop – don't come home late alone.

Every night is a balancing act on an invisible thread.
No one protects her: not the clubs, not the police, not the city.

Her absence is moral:
everyone knows she exists, but no one wants to recognize her as a worker.

I, Nando, when I see girls leaving clubs at dawn, I know that strength is not glamorous.
It is survival.

— Nando

Delivery Woman

Karla, 30 – Queens → Manhattan, rain, snow, heat, always on the streets

Karla works with her bike.
Thermal backpack on her back, phone on the handlebars, app that decides everything:

– route
– pay – time – penalty – next order

She is the "smart" part of the system.
The part no one wants to look at.

She darts past cars, taxis, potholes, and unforgiving traffic lights. She pedals in the rain, through the snow, with the wind chilling her face. All for a few dollars delivered drop by drop.

That evening, she returns home exhausted.
No protection, no security, no insurance.

Its absence is digital:
it exists only within apps. Not outside.

— Nando

Single Mother from Deep Queens

Erika, 33 – Far Rockaway, between ocean, distance, and poverty

Far Rockaway is New York, but not necessarily.
It is remote, disconnected, and forgotten. An area the city uses only for statistics.

Erika lives there with two children.
She works in a supermarket. Every day she does what she can:

– raises the children
– dresses them – makes breakfast – takes them to school – runs to work – handles customers, weights, cash registers – comes home on exceptionally long buses – cooks – cleans – puts everything in order

She is a mother who has three lives:
her own, that of her children, and that of the neighborhood.

Her absence is geographical:
she lives too far away to be seen.

I, Nando, look at maps and distances and I know one thing:
those who live in Far Rockaway live every day with an invisible handicap.

— Nando

Woman from the Black Community of Brooklyn

Latoya, 40 – Brownsville, survival routine

Brownsville is one of New York's most damaged neighborhoods.
Ancient poverty, poor services, neglected schools.

Latoya has two jobs:
in the morning at a school, in the evening at a retirement home.

Her day never ends.
She has no timetable. She has no margins. She has no respite.

Every month you must decide what to pay first:
rent? bills? food? transportation? medicine?

Her absence is racial:
in a city that likes to call itself “progressive,” black women from

poor neighborhoods disappear last and only become visible again when there is a tragedy to be posted online.

— Nando

Tech Woman

Hannah, 29 – Manhattan, startup, anxiety, pressure, pretense

Hannah works at a tech startup that talks about “diversity,” “inclusion,” “the future,” and “new leadership.”

Then, in practice:
– men at the top – men who make decisions – men who lead the projects – men who receive the funds.

Hannah does all the invisible work:
organizing, editing, presenting, dealing with clients, and dealing with emergencies.

She is good.
So good that everyone takes advantage of her.

She has been in therapy for a year for anxiety and burnout.

Its absence is cultural:
tech claims to be modern, but it is old inside.

I, Nando, have understood that the “new world” does not change until those who govern it change.

— Nando

Undocumented Immigrant

Yaritza, 26 years old – Bronx, works everywhere, lives in hiding.

Yaritza does not exist for the state.
Therefore, the state does not exist for her.

She works in three unusual places:
– cleaning in an apartment building – cooking in a deli –
babysitting when needed.

It is paid for in cash.
No security.
No protection.
No rights.

She is afraid of the police,
afraid of immigration, afraid of homeowners, afraid that a complaint will make her disappear forever.

Her absence is legal:
she lives in the gap between two worlds. She is necessary but unrecognized.

— Nando

Immigrant Woman on the Run

Maha, 37, from Astoria, escapes forced marriage.

Maha arrived from the Middle East two years ago.
She left behind an abusive husband, a family that did not want her freedom, and a culture that does not allow a woman to make her own decisions.

In New York, she lives in a shared room in Astoria.
She works at a grocery store. She learns English in the evenings by watching videos on her phone.

She carries within her an ancient fear:
that someone in her family will find her. That everything will go back. That freedom will end.

Her absence is affective:
she exists halfway, with one foot in the new life and one in eternal escape.

New York gave her the chance to disappear.
Now she must learn to exist.

— Nando

Woman of the Miles of Roads, Metro, Noise, Race

Elena, 50 years old – Manhattan, a life spent in the city that devours.

Elena has lived in the city for over thirty years.
She has seen neighborhoods, buildings, shops, and faces change.
She has seen friends leave, colleagues lose their jobs, families break up.

She stayed.

She works as a supervisor in a department store.
Long shifts, heavy responsibility, constant pressure. She leads teams, manages customers, and saves days that should have been missed.

Elena is the real New York:
the one that does not appear in the movies. The one that makes the system run. The one that does not complain but feels every blow.

Her absence is existential:
she gave everything to the city, and the city gave her back only resistance.

I, Nando, when I meet women who have lived here for twenty years, I understand something no tourist will ever understand:

living in New York is a slow war. And those who stay win every day without celebrating.

— Nando

Epilogue

New York is a city that demands to be seen,
but never truly looks. It is a place that enters you like an unsolicited election: either you accept it, or it crushes you.

Within this perfect chaos, women are the invisible axis that holds everything together.
They are on trains, in kitchens, in hospitals, in schools, in skyscrapers, in warehouses, in neighborhoods where power never enters. They are everywhere but are considered only when needed.

The city runs faster than life itself,
and in that race it consumes those who truly sustain it. New York promises everything: success, opportunity, salvation. Then it demands a price it does not state.

The truth is simple:
the most famous city in the world thrives on the backs of women who never make the covers.

This chapter brings them back to the surface.
One by one. Story by story. Unfiltered. Unromanticized. With a straight back, as every life deserves, ignored while bearing the weight of millions of others.

Reflection

Each state in volume shows a type of absence.
New York contains them all.

Here the feminine absence is total and multiplied:
– absence of time– absence of protection– absence of mental space– absence of recognition– absence of listening– absence of respite– absence of autonomous identity– absence of return for what is given.

The city that sells the idea of freedom
is the same city that forces thousands of women to survive within systems that were not designed for them. They are essential, but expendable. They are present, but invisible. They are the engine, but not the narrative.

In New York, every woman faces a different battle,
but they all share the same ground: a city that does not stop, not even in the face of their struggle.

And that is precisely why these pages are necessary:
New York is not just skyline, art, culture, success. It is also absence. Female absence. The most avoided, the most authentic, the most constant.

Personal Note

New York is my home.
And precisely because it is my home, I do not forgive its lies.

I am not interested in describing the city seen by tourists, newspapers, TV series, or other people's dreams.
I am interested in the city that breathes, that bleeds, which breaks and rebuilds itself every day on the shoulders of real people.

I have seen enough to understand one thing definitively:
women here hold twice as much and get half as much. Not because they are weak, but because the city has grown accustomed to their strength. And when the world gets used to your strength, it stops protecting you.

I, Nando, have authored these stories because I cannot accept that all this is passed over in silence.
I cannot accept that those who move this entire machine are marginalized from the narrative. I cannot accept that the noise of the city drowns out the noise of the lives that keep it afloat.

New York is beautiful,
but it is not innocent.

These pages are my way of saying it,
without sugarcoating anything, without taking away an ounce of truth, without asking anyone's permission.

— **Nando**