

47 North Street
Port Pirie, South Australia
January 5th, 1919

My Darling Albert,

I sit at my desk writing this letter, crying to myself thinking of what conditions you find yourself in; my spirit is as low as the day you left for Egypt and the war.

Today, I write sitting next to your letters from the war which themselves carried me through tearful nights, but never with the worry that your last letter imparted. Your father and I were beyond disturbed when we learned of your internment at this Asylum. I was, of course, overjoyed to hear from you, despite the news your letter contained, as your father and I were anxious to confirm your return - oh my how I cried when the papers wrote of the end of the war! And yet now, months later, you, a servant of your nation, sit caged like an animal. You must excuse my language, but this is disgraceful, there is no other word for it. Upon receiving your letter, your father exclaimed, "Upon the Devil," and immediately commandeered your uncle to ride with him to Adelaide post-haste to set about your freedom.

Perhaps it will bring you some pleasure to know that I remember you to my church friends every Sunday, and quite fondly at that. Of course, some had boys themselves lost over there, so I must tread carefully, but they are glad to hear of you regardless. Mrs Templeton still asks after you for her daughter - oh how she blushes when I recite your heroics!

My son, I hope you are as good as can be and this letter reaches you fine. Rest well knowing your father is on his journey to you. I hope you think it convenient to write to me again; I shall not rest well until you are returned to us,

Much Love,
Mum and Dad.

Writer's Note - Upset Mother

20 years into the ward's life, World War 1 begins and leaves behind an entire generation of boys scarred by war. Based on newspaper reports of several Great War veterans being housed at the ward, Gallipoli veterans included, the idea of writing from this perspective seemed very interesting.

A soldier returned home from a brutal war only to be interned at a mental Asylum for reasons unknown, although presumably connected to his experience of war. What affect does that have on him and his family? Plenty of mothers and sons wrote during the war, but how would a mother who just gave her son to the war react when he is subsequently placed in a mental asylum?

This character is not based on any real person, but I envision her as an aging housewife with only one child: a son that went to war for 4 years only to return driven mad and left in squalor in the Z-Ward.

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