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**Florence Mae Dixon:
CAMPUS EXPANSION DELAYED
AFTER DISCOVERY OF 2,000 UNMARKED GRAVES**

Saffyre Falkenberg

I was 19 when my husband sent me to Jackson, Mississippi, away from the child I was sure couldn't be mine. He called it a hospital, but the white, stone columns, sprawling lawns, and enormous magnolia trees couldn't hide what it really was.

"Stay in bed," they said. "Don't wear yourself out." I was left to be coddled like the babe I left behind, rocked to sleep by mindless wails and the screeching of mockingbirds.

I wasted my days in bed, kept company by the smells of burning coal, kerosene, and melting wax. They didn't allow me to rest outside during the hot Mississippi summers, when the mosquitoes were the only visitors and the air was its own swamp. I was a number, just another lunatic; one more woman with a case of nerves.

I was 22 when I was moved to the new sanitarium, as patient # 29 gave me the "consumption." I suppose keeping white skin away from black skin was more important to them than keeping the sick away from the healthy. But we're all sick here.



BENCH ON BISHOP Hector Reyes



I became a living skeleton, drenched
 in feverish sweat and hellfire. No point
 in making friends with the other bodies;
 they came and went quicker than there were beds.
 We were all just coughing, sneezing bed numbers.

I was 25 when I drowned in my own lungs,
 disappearing into the night like the sun. My
 husband had stopped writing years before;
 it was no surprise that he didn't claim me like
 he once did. They tossed me in the ground
 behind the asylum like a sack of moldy grain, with
 nothing to show that I had ever haunted those halls.
 Many other "numbers" from the Mississippi State
 Lunatic Asylum joined my plot of earth. Our only
 acknowledgement came from the wildflowers
 Mother Nature brought us each year, the worms
 holding feasts of celebration over our convenient demises.

I was 138 when I saw light again; it wasn't
 at the end of the tunnel. They took
 me to another hospital, the stench
 of my rotten body clashing with the sharp
 smells of sterility and alcohol.

Instead of finding my family, they found
 out how much it would cost to rebury me.

Instead of learning my name, they learned
 I was one out of two thousand.

I am still a number, another body, simply
 one more corpse in an unmarked grave.