

LAURA'S 72-HOUR HOLD
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Part 1: Thursday Afternoon

A PERSONAL PROLOGUE:

I've loved seeing women in straitjackets, ever since I was a little perv, and I enjoy dreaming up situations in which a strong, gorgeous young woman somehow finds herself helplessly trapped within a thick canvas cocoon. Most of my fantasies revolve around the wrongful involuntary commitment of a woman to a mental hospital. When a normal young woman is classified as mentally ill, be it by the carelessness or malevolence of the authorities, she is branded as unstable, out of touch with reality, and dangerous to herself and to others. The shocked young woman can react with anger and outrage or with calm attempts to logically convince the authorities that this classification is wrong; whatever her reaction may be, it is usually seen as further proof of her "sickness", and the vibrant, intelligent beauty is likely to find herself locked in a maximum security psychiatric ward, her womanly body confined in cruel canvas and leather restraints as she rolls around a thickly padded cell, legally infantilized and stripped of her rights as an adult citizen.

It's even more intriguing if the woman was responsible in part for her predicament. Perhaps she mouthed off to her parents one night, and they became concerned to a fault about her uncharacteristic behavior. Maybe she's undergoing therapy already, and a bad attempt at a joke triggers a danger signal in the psychiatrist's mind, a reminder of a former patient he couldn't help. Maybe she gets pulled over for a minor traffic offense and throws a major temper tantrum, and the policeman, nearing the end of his double shift, decides to let the "nutball brigade" handle this spoiled brat. Whatever the instigating event, it's always fun to imagine the look on the woman's face as she realizes just what she's started.

Lately, I've thought about the role of government in passing and enforcing laws concerning involuntary commitment. What if a legislature passed a law which, in a well-meaning attempt to safeguard the people and identify psychological problems which would otherwise go unnoticed, also made it much easier for a woman to find herself in the predicament outlined above?

Let's begin with this scenario: due to a cluster of violent incidents involving young people with previously undiagnosed mental illnesses, combined with a manufactured media frenzy and strong lobbying by the county psychological association, (fictional) Benjamin County has passed a law requiring all people from the ages of 18 to 25 to undergo mandatory psychological testing each year. The test has to be taken within 30 days of the person's birthday, and must be scheduled ahead of time.

The test consists of a 100-question general exam and a brief meeting with a psychiatrist who has reviewed the exam. The psychiatrist can either give the person a clean bill of mental health, require the person to undergo therapy with a psychiatrist of his/her choice, or commit the person to a psychiatric hospital for 72 hours for further examination and observation. If the person is committed under a 72-hour hold, the person's parents are automatically granted power of attorney over their child's affairs. If the person's parents are dead or otherwise unable to assume these responsibilities, a court-appointed attorney will take their place. At the end of the 72 hour period, the person can be released from the hospital either with or without mandated therapy, or may be committed for a longer period to the County Mental Hospital or to a private institution.

Let's advance several months and peek into the life of Laura Granger. Laura's back home in Benjamin County, after her first semester at a prestigious university, where she's attending on both athletic and academic scholarships. She celebrated her 19th birthday, and she decided to get this psych exam nonsense out of the way as soon as possible. She scheduled the exam for late afternoon, expecting to breeze right through it and meet up with her friends for dinner and partying later. To save time, the hazel-eyed redhead had already dressed for the night life: over her bra and thong panties, she's wearing

a black turtleneck jumpsuit made of ribbed cotton and spandex, confirming to every muscular curve of her volleyball player's body. Over that she sports a tiny denim miniskirt and soft, tan leather boots which wrapped snugly around her juicy calves and ended a few inches above her knees, the sturdy 70s-style stacked heels making her already Amazonian 6-foot-tall frame even more astonishing and eye-catching.

Laura walked into the psychiatric exam center, a small stand-alone single-floor building. There were about two dozen of these centers scattered about the county, purposefully kept separate from the hospitals to ease fears and encourage attendance. She moved past the small, empty waiting room to the check-in desk, showing the receptionist her ID and telling her of the appointment. The receptionist smiles and hands Laura a clipboard with several forms to read and fill out.

Laura plops down on a couch, props up her long legs on a low table covered with Parents and People back issues, and studies the forms. The top sheets were the usual medical boilerplate: address, next of kin, allergies, past hospitalizations and the like. There was a form at the bottom which concerned her a little. By signing and dating the document, she would acknowledge that she was legally bound to the psychiatrist's decisions, which could involve an "involuntary committal to a psychiatric ward for no more than 72 hours for further observation" and possibly a longer stay at the County Mental Hospital! No matter how remote that possibility, Laura still felt a bit queasy reading that. She steadied herself and signed the document.

The final document stated that in the event of an involuntary committal, the staff at the center was authorized to use both chemical sedation and physical restraints "to ensure the safety of the patient and the staff", and once again she had to sign at the bottom in acknowledgement. The paper also had a list of the restraints that could be used, including leather cuffs, bodybags, and straitjackets. "Straitjackets?" Laura thought. "Do they still use those things?" She remembered watching late night TV, trying to stay awake during a break in cramming for midterms, and catching part of a film in which a female reporter went undercover in a private mental hospital, to investigate allegations of corruption among the staff. The actress was tied in a straitjacket several times in the film, but it looked more like a baggy artist's smock which wouldn't hold a three-year-old for 10 seconds. Laura shook her head, trying to clear the cobwebs of doubt which had so quickly filled her thoughts, and signed the form. "They probably have one straitjacket for the REALLY violent people. All I have to do is keep my cool," she said to herself.

Laura brought the clipboard back to the receptionist, who quickly went through the papers and told Laura to wait while they prepare the exam. As the receptionist disappeared from the front desk, Laura took a closer look at her surroundings. She saw heavy wooden doors on either side of the front desk, the left one marked "AUTHORIZED STAFF ONLY" and the one on the right marked "EXAM ROOMS". Laura gently tried to turn a door handle, but both were locked, and she saw that they also had card-scanners next to the locks. "Pretty high-security for just a test center," she thought.

A few minutes later, the receptionist returned to her desk, and Laura was just about to ask her about the exam when the Exam Rooms door opened, and three women entered the waiting room. There was a thin woman with black hair cut in a bob, standing about 5-foot-7, dressed in nurse's scrubs with a name tag reading "Florence Crenshaw, R.N." The other two women were about the same height, but considerably burlier than the nurse, both wearing plain white orderly scrubs and nametags identifying them as "Jacobs" and "Johnston".

"Laura Granger?" asked Nurse Crenshaw, in a professional tone of voice.

"Yes, that's me."

"We've prepared your exam room. Please follow me." Nurse Crenshaw turned and swiped her nametag through the card-reader next to the Exam Rooms door. The card reader beeped twice, the lock turned with a heavy metallic thunk, and Nurse Crenshaw held the door open. The orderlies quickly moved towards Laura and each firmly grabbed one of her arms with both hands, one around each wrist and one around each bicep, near the shoulder. Laura was alarmed by this unexpected treatment, even though they weren't hurting her.

Nurse Crenshaw gave Laura a comforting smile. "We didn't mean to frighten you; this is just part of our security procedure. Come, please." The orderlies slowly began to move towards the door, and Laura walked with them, the three of them turning sideways to get through the entry. Once they were all through, Nurse Crenshaw came in, letting the door lock behind her.

They were now in a small hallway, with six heavy wooden doors on each side and another one at the end of the hall, all with card scanners as well. Nurse Crenshaw stepped in front of them and led them to the very end of the hall. "Here we are, Laura. Exam Room 12." The nurse swiped her card and opened the door. As they entered, Laura noticed two small chairs, swiveling on posts bolted to the floor at the opposite ends of the room. One of chairs seemed to have a seatbelt attached to it and a footrest, and was stationed in front of a small desk with a computer monitor and keyboard.

The orderlies led Laura to the chair and asked her to sit down, squatting down to either side of her as they kept their grips on her arms. Laura saw that the footrest also had seatbelt-type restraints. Nurse Crenshaw stood in front of the three of them. "Laura, I have to fasten these belts across your waist and legs for everyone's safety, including your own. Do you understand?"

"Yes. ma'am," Laura replied uneasily.

The nurse fastened a belt across each shin, tightly holding Laura's booted legs to the padded leg rest. She then tightened the belt across Laura's waist, and when she was satisfied, the nurse nodded to the orderlies, who released Laura's arms and turned her chair towards the desk. Laura saw that both monitor and keyboard were attached securely to the desk. The monitor screen displayed the title page "BENJAMIN COUNTY PSYCHIAITRIC EXAMINATION for Laura Maryanne Granger Age 19 - Press ENTER to begin."

"Just follow the instructions on the screen to take the exam, and you'll see the psychiatrist after he has a chance to review the results," said Nurse Crenshaw as she and the two orderlies walk out of the exam room and lock the door behind them. Laura noticed that there was no doorknob on the inside. She tested the belts and found them to be unyielding. Laura sighed and pressed the Enter key to start the test.

There were 100 questions on the test - actually, they were more like general statements, like "I am frustrated with my academic progress" or "My parents can be very meddlesome", and she had to pick an answer ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". She had a maximum of 10 seconds to answer each question, and there was no returning to previous questions - once you answered, that was that. An impatient Laura barreled through the questions, barely reading some of them before answering. After she reached the 100th question, Laura swiveled around in her chair, waiting for the second half of the examination.

After about 15 minutes, the door opens, and the psychiatrist on duty, an average-looking man in his early-fifties, enters the room and quickly sits on the other chair, out of arm's reach, Laura realized.

"Laura? My name is Dr. Brown, and I'm here to talk to you a bit, concerning your exam results. I just want to make clear that there are no right or wrong answers to aim for here. Just answer as openly and as honestly as you can. Am I clear?"

"Crystal clear, Doctor," Laura replied with a little too much enthusiasm.

"Very good. Now, Laura . . . how do you feel about your parents?"

"My parents? Well, I love them. I mean, they've given me so much and I would be anywhere without their love and support."

"I see. It's interesting that you say that, but in the exam, you chose 'strongly agree' to answer the statement, 'I feel my parents are never satisfied with my accomplishments.'"

There was an awkward pause as Laura, already somewhat unnerved by her surroundings, grasped for a saving explanation. "Well, um, they do drive me pretty hard, I suppose. There are times I want to yell at them to back off, but I think they just want me to work hard and achieve great things."

"I see," Dr. Brown said, taking notes. He flipped through the exam results and stopped on a page. "So how's college life treating you?"

Laura perked up at the change in subject. "Oh, it's been great - exhausting, but great."

"Uh-huh. Well, on the exam, you agreed with the statement, 'I feel major stress from my current surroundings.'"

"W-e-e-e-I-I-I, I do get stressed out often, but I usually calm down by focusing on the tasks at hand and directing my energy properly."

"Usually'? What happens when you can't calm down in that manner?"

"I take a jog around the campus. It's pretty nice at night."

"You jog around at night? Don't you think that's a risky activity?"

The thought hadn't really crossed Laura's mind. "Well, it's pretty well lit," she responded, knowing how weak that sounded.

"You also agreed with the statement, 'I've had violent thoughts about my friends.'"

"Um . . . I mean, I feel like smacking my teammates sometimes when they zone out during a game, but I'd never actually DO that."

"Uh-HUH."

The next 15 minutes or so followed the same template: Laura answering a question, Dr. Brown pulling out an exam answer contradicting her statement, Laura stammering some half-thought-out rebuttal. Mercifully, Dr. Brown stood up and said, "Well, Laura, I'm going to write up my findings and recommendations, and I'll be back in a few minutes to inform you of my decisions." He took a small beeper out of his coat and pressed a button; about 20 seconds later, one of the orderlies came and opened the door. "It's been a pleasure talking to you, Laura," the doctor said as he exited.

"Likewise," Laura called after him as the door closed again. Laura let out a big sigh and wiped the flop sweat off her forehead. Just an hour ago, she was looking forward to a big night on the town; now, she wasn't sure what to expect.

About 10 minutes later, the door opened, and the doctor, the nurse, and both orderlies entered the room. Dr. Brown and Nurse Crenshaw stood by the other chair, and the orderlies stood on either side of Laura.

"Laura," Dr. Brown started, "a young woman's first extended stay away from her home can be a stressful situation, which can be compounded by the additional strains of the athletic and academic endeavors in a competitive university. Your answers to the exam and to my questions reveal troublesome aspects about your psyche which could blossom into full-fledged neuroses if left untreated. This is why I've decided to have you involuntarily committed for a 72-hour period at the County Mental Hospital." Laura's stomach fell through the floor at these words, and her mouth opened in silent protest. "Your parents have been notified, and they will have power of attorney over you while you're in the care of the hospital."

"Now, there is a separate ward for 72-hour-holds, so you won't be in contact with really dangerous mental patients," Dr. Brown continued, "and it's completely staffed by women, so you don't need to worry about sexual assault. You'll undergo a rigorous examination process to see what kind of treatment you need, if any. These could be the most important 72 hours of your life, so stay calm and work hard. The staff is there to help you through this. Best of luck, Laura." Dr. Brown left the room.

Laura snapped out of her stunned state of mind when the orderlies grabbed her arms and Nurse Crenshaw undid the belts. "Now, slowly stand up and follow me to the back, Laura." The four of them left the exam room and went through the door at the end of the hallway, which led to a winding, narrow series of halls which seemed too large for such a small building. They finally came to a room in the back, which had a low padded bench on one side, a higher shelf on the other side with several bundles lying on it, and a metal door marked EXIT leading to the outside. There was a full-length mirror next to the door, and Laura could see herself, wide-eyed and scared, but trying to remain calm.

Nurse Crenshaw turned to Laura and said, "I'm going to remove your miniskirt, as it'll interfere with the restraints." Laura was too scared to verbally protest as the nurse unzipped the skirt and let it fall to the floor. "Please slowly step out of the skirt." Laura did as she was told, and Nurse Crenshaw neatly folded the skirt and placed it in a small bag, along with Laura's purse minus her ID card, which lay on the high shelf. "Your parents will pick up your possessions later."

Laura saw herself in the mirror again, now just wearing the tight black jumpsuit and thigh boots. She always joked that this was her "secret agent" outfit, and she gained some emotional strength from her appearance. Seventy-two hours? It's just a long weekend. She could hack it, right?

Nurse Crenshaw's voice quickly brought her back to reality. "Here are the restraints we are going to put on you for your transport to the mental hospital. First, we're going to put this straitjacket on you." She held up a mass of thick canvas, straps and buckles. It was modeled on the Posey straitjacket model, with several modifications. Instead of the usual 4 straps holding the back closed, there were a whopping 10 straps, to maximally encase its victim. Speaking of straps, there were two of them at the end of the sleeves instead of the usual one, and the front loop, used to keep the straitjacketed person from pulling the arms over her head, was a good six inches wide. (The side loops were the same as on the standard Posey.)

Nurse Crenshaw continued, "Now believe it or not, there are people who can escape from this straitjacket, so after you're securely strapped in, we're putting you into this transport jacket." She put down the straitjacket and picked up another canvas shell. It looked like a straitjacket, but without sleeves, and with two canvas handles on each side. "As you can see, this jacket has leg holes at the bottom for you to step in, so you can't pull it off. The high collar will keep you from maneuvering your arms out the top, and all these buckles are locking, for maximum security."

"Is this all really necessary?" Laura gasped.

"You DID read the forms, didn't you?" the nurse calmly replied. "This is for everyone's safety, including you. Now, after the transport jacket is locked on, we will put this hobble around your ankles, so you can't kick out and run away." She held up two thick brown leather cuffs with locking straps, attached by two leather straps which looped through metal slots on the cuffs, limiting her stride to 18 inches.

"And finally, since silence is golden, especially in mental hospitals, I'm going to put this muzzle on you." She held up a wad of brown leather, a large panel with a protruding, threaded knob and an assortment of leather straps attached. She ripped open a sealed plastic bag, removed a large foam rubber ball, and screwed it onto the muzzle knob. "This will fill your mouth without causing unnecessary strain. Well, let's get started." The nurse removed a syringe and a small vial from her pocket and placed it on the shelf. "If you become agitated or violent, we are authorized to give you a sedative. I hope that won't be necessary today."

"It won't," Laura quickly responded.

"Good. Please hold your arms and hands out straight, keeping your fingers together." The orderlies guided Laura's hands to the proper position. At the same time, they used their legs to force Laura's feet to spread out a bit, to keep her off-balance and less prone to kick out. "I'm going to slide the straitjacket over your arms, and the orderlies will hold it closed as I fasten the straps. Keep looking forward and do not move your arms or legs. Am I clear?"

"Yes, ma'am." Laura's voice sounded weak and defeated.

"All right then." As Nurse Crenshaw advanced with the straitjacket, the orderlies removed their grip around Laura's hands and grabbed her elbows. The nurse slid the jacket sleeves over Laura's forearms, and the orderlies quickly grabbed the jacket and quickly pulled it back over her upper arms and shoulders. They held the jacket shut tightly with both hands as the nurse walked behind Laura, pushed her long red hair over her left shoulder, and began fastening all the back straps. Laura looked at the sleeves covering her arms; both extended a few inches beyond her fingers and were sewn shut at the ends. Two long straps extended from one of the sleeves, while two short straps with metal friction buckles came from the other. She surreptitiously rubbed the inside of one sleeve with her fingers, noting the rough texture of the canvas, and thanked her lucky stars she was wearing a neck-to-ankle jumpsuit, and would avoid unnecessary abrasions. She couldn't spread her fingers apart more than an inch or so, due to the narrowness of the sleeves at that point.

Nurse Crenshaw pulled the top two straps through the buckles to keep Laura's arms inside the sleeves, and then started from the bottom of the jacket, pulling each strap snugly, but not overly tight, as she wanted the straitjacket to fit Laura's torso properly and reduce her discomfort as much as possible. Once the nurse was satisfied with her work, she began retightening each strap to make the strong material conform to Laura's shape. Laura looked in the mirror as the bright white canvas tautly hugged her broad shoulders, generous chest, and muscular abs without crushing her or cutting off circulation.

After readjusting the bottom strap, Nurse Crenshaw crouched down and reached through Laura's legs to a wide strap dangling from the bottom of the jacket. Laura had just noticed this strap and was wondering about its use when the nurse yanked it back between her legs and fastened it to a buckle sticking out between the two bottom back straps. Laura inhaled sharply as she felt the thick canvas strap press against the front of her crotch and slightly separate her firm, round buttocks.

Nurse Crenshaw walked back around in front of Laura and the orderlies. "Laura, please lower and bend your right arm at the elbow." Laura followed directions, and the nurse pulled her right sleeve through the wide loop below Laura's chest and fed it through another, thinner loop on the side, and one orderly grabbed the sleeve as it came to Laura's back. Nurse Crenshaw had Laura do the same for her left arm, adjusting her arms into a comfortable position, crossed in front of her. Nurse Crenshaw went around Laura's back again and fastened the two sleeve straps; as she did so, the orderlies placed one hand on each of Laura's elbows and pushed them towards each other, to remove as much slack as possible. When they were done, Laura's forearms disappeared behind the wide front loop, and her hands were nearly on opposite sides of her body, flattened against her waist as she gave herself the tightest hug she ever felt. The nurse then took each strap on the jacket, stuck it through the belt loop on the corresponding buckle strap, and threaded it back through the buckle, to make them even more difficult to loosen.

The orderlies let Laura pull her legs together again as Nurse Crenshaw walked towards the shelf. "Laura, before we put the transport jacket on, why don't you test out the straitjacket first? Struggle as hard as you can, so we can be sure of our work." The orderlies took a few steps away from the jacketed young woman, who looked around uncertainly. "Don't worry, Laura, this isn't a trap. Just take a few moments to see how effective the jacket is."

Laura first tried to raise and lower her arms, but couldn't get more than an inch in either direction before running into the loops on the front and sides. She tried moving her arms apart, but the orderlies' skill

and strength in removing slack made that equally futile. She bent backwards and forwards, but the tightly fastened thick canvas made it impossible to curl her spine, so she could only bend at her hips. But this action had a big drawback, as the wide crotch strap rubbed against her privates, and even behind the cotton jumpsuit and panties, she could feel herself getting stimulated, so she quickly stood up straight. She turned to her side to check out the back of the jacket in the mirror, and she felt completely defeated by the sight of the zillion straps and buckles holding it closed. She turned back to Nurse Crenshaw and sighed, "I guess I'm done with the test."

"OK then, we'll get the transport jacket on next." The orderlies returned to Laura's side and each grabbed a side loop on the straitjacket. Nurse Crenshaw held the transport jacket open, with the leg holes touching the floor. "Laura, please put your legs into the leg holes of the jacket, slowly." Laura put her left foot in, and the nurse raised the jacket a few inches to make sure Laura wasn't stepping on it. After Laura put her right foot in, Nurse Crenshaw raised the jacket to her shoulders, and the orderlies grabbed the high neck collar and loosely fastened the two small straps. The nurse went around and fed the metal grommeted straps through the locking buckles. There were only five straps to fasten this time, not counting the neck straps, and Laura heard a tiny click as each one was locked into place. The nurse placed a finger inside the high collar while fastening the straps, to ensure the fit was secure but not dangerous. Laura noticed that the material on the inside of the collar was softer than the rest of the jacket, and thought that was a courteous touch. She also noticed the same soft material along the crotch of the transport jacket, though a fat lot of good that did, considering the strap she already had down there. There was a clear plastic pocket on the left chest of the jacket; Nurse Crenshaw slid Laura's ID card inside. On the right chest was the number 72, to identify her as a 72-hour-hold patient.

In the mirror, Laura saw herself completely encased in a double layer of inescapable canvas, from the neck collar to her hips. The transport jacket didn't add too much tightness, Laura thought, but it served to take away even the shred of a hint of an iota of a possibility of escape. Her powerful legs, with their tree-trunk thighs and curvy calves, were still free, but that would be taken care of soon.

The orderlies grabbed the handles on the transport jacket and led Laura to the low bench, turning her face towards the wall. "Laura, please kneel on the bench," asked Nurse Crenshaw, and as Laura's shins sank into the comfortable padded vinyl of the bench, the orderlies gently but firmly held the jacket against the wall, keeping Laura from resting on her ankles. The nurse fastened the thick brown leather restraints around each ankle and locked them. Laura noticed how short the tether between the cuffs was, and wondered how long it'd take to do her usual volleyball practice runs with them on.

The orderlies let Laura sit down on her shackled ankles as Nurse Crenshaw retrieved the muzzle. "Laura, I'm going to place the muzzle on you now. The foam ball is held onto the muzzle with industrial-strength velcro, so it won't dislodge and strangulate you. Please open your mouth as wide as you can." She had to work the ball side to side to get it completely into Laura's mouth, and Laura was astonished as she felt the soft foam completely stretch out her jaw and cheeks, pressing her tongue down. She tried closing her mouth, but could only move her jaw an inch or so, and the foam would expand back into its original, onerous dimensions. Two straps coming from the front of the mouth panel were fastened at the nape of her neck, another strap looped from her chin to the top of her head, and assorted other straps were fastened around her face and head to keep the gargantuan gag firmly in place.

After the muzzle was secured, the orderlies turned Laura around so she could sit normally on the bench. "Thank you very much for your help, ladies," Nurse Crenshaw said to the orderlies. "I'll stay here with Laura until the transport van arrives."

"Are you sure you'll be OK by yourself?" Orderly Jacobs asked. Laura was surprised for a moment, as this was the first time she'd heard a peep out of either one of them.

"Oh, I don't think Laura will be any trouble, will you?" Laura shook her head and tried to say "No," but the filling mass distending her lower face prevented any sound from emerging. "Besides, they'll arrive any minute, and I'll page you if there are any problems." The orderlies nodded their assent and left the room.

Nurse Crenshaw turned on a monitor which showed surveillance footage from the rear of the building, to keep an eye out for the transport van. "You're lucky you scheduled your exam so late in the day. If you came in earlier, you'd have to wait in a padded seclusion room for an hour, or even longer, and we'd probably have to sedate you."

"Yeah, lucky, lucky me," Laura grumbled to herself. She slowly flexed her legs, trying to get rid of her nervous energy. She looked in the mirror and saw how the lower half of her face was completely engulfed in brown leather, starting right below her nose and wrapping under her chin. Two small straps crawled up either side of her nose, came together and disappeared over her head, another strap went over her head perpendicular to the first one, going from ear to ear, and a thick strap encircled her forehead, threading through the vertical straps. She couldn't see how they fastened, as the nurse had adjusted her hair to cover everything up.

"Here they are." Laura's head turned towards the monitor, and she saw a large black van with the white stencil "COUNTY MENTAL HOSPITAL" on the sides. "The only way to travel," Laura thought. Nurse Crenshaw opened the door to let two large men in hospital scrubs in. One orderly was holding a type of scanner, and said, "Laura Granger, 72-hour-hold?" Nurse Crenshaw nodded, and handed the commitment papers to him. The man briefly studied the paper, and scanned a bar code at the top. As she heard a "bippity-boop" noise from the scanner, Laura couldn't help but feel like a securely wrapped package being sent via Federal Express.

The hospital orderlies then advanced towards Laura and raised her to a standing position. The scanner man grabbed a handle on each side of the transport jacket, while the other man wrapped his arms around Laura's legs and picked them up. The men carefully carried Laura outside, followed by Nurse Crenshaw. They went to the open back of the van and stepped inside, keeping a firm grip on Laura the whole time.

There were two thickly padded benches inside the van, with enough space for a total of six people to be secured within. The orderlies sat Laura upright on the seat closest to the front of the van. One man held her steady as the other fastened the straps. There were two across her upper and lower shins, two more across her thighs, and an airplane-pilot-style x-harness which came down across her shoulders and attached to either side of her hips, with an additional strap across her lap.

The orderlies clambered out of the back of the van. The man with the scanner told Nurse Crenshaw, "We have a few more women to pick up, so she'll be back there for a while."

"I see," she replied, and she looked towards Laura. "Good luck, Laura!" she called out as the orderlies closed the van doors. A few seconds later, Laura felt the van start up and move out.