

Anna didn't know what they'd do when she got there, but she'd heard the stories about women, especially women, especially difficult women, who were got rid of, who never got out. And she was definitely a difficult woman. The carriage that confined her, its windows sealed shut, sweltered like a furnace on this unseasonably warm morning, its roof hard-battered by the sun. Anna sweated, but fear slithered icily all over her skin. She wiped her palms on her trousers. Felt the reassurance of the familiar small book in her pocket. She leaned forward to get some air to her back, only slightly, as the wide leather restraint around her waist that bound her to the seat afforded little leeway. Her toes barely reaching the carriage floor, she pushed her ankles against their straps. No give. From the seat opposite, the man glanced at her, said nothing, wiped his brow on a dirty kerchief, went back to looking out the window, his loose body joggling as the carriage rumbled over the rutted road. In his brown woollen suit, he reeked like a sheepcote. His pox scars were much worse than Anna's own, and she felt a pang of sympathy, knowing what he'd endured some time past. He was just doing his job. Doing what he was told. She didn't blame him, for it was no fault of his that she was in this predicament. That she was restrained like this, being bundled away like so much greasy rubbish.

Of all physical discomforts, she hated worst of all any kind of confinement, and she pushed, hard, against the ankle straps and strained against the waist strap, pushing forward so the edge of the leather dug into her flesh.

"Now, now, Miss Dickinson," the man said, "Do behave yourself." But she couldn't stop and she couldn't quell the panic that rose and rose in her throat threatening to overthrow her self-control. And this was just the beginning and it would be so very much worse when she got there, where they might put her in a little cell like a criminal or maybe even in a cage like an animal. And as the carriage wheels rolled along and as the horses' hooves boomed along and as the miles of road covered grew longer, the straps bound her tighter and she...