

LAURELANNA
EDWIN

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Laurelanna Edwin

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Note to my readers

This is a flash fiction story prequel to *The Destined Divines*. However, it's best to read the novel first to fully understand Laurelanna's situation and magical abilities in this story.

STARK WHITE WALLS surrounded Laurelanna and a garment that smelled of sweat and urine wrapped tightly around her, preventing Laurelanna from moving her arms. The bed beneath her was stiff and lumpy. She squeezed her eyes shut, hoping to stop the confusion and anxiety that swirled inside her. The bed squeaked and moaned while she struggled to her feet. Finally, she managed and stumbled over to the door and peered through a small window. A long hallway stretched in both directions, and a nurse in a white dress and hat walked beside a woman who appeared dazed. As they approached, Laurelanna noted the woman's eyes were empty and dilated.

Where was she? Laurelanna racked her mind, and a faint memory of Valda, daughter of the infamous evil witch Carmith, floated in her mind. Valda came to Edwin Manor and attacked her, but Laurelanna couldn't reach anything else. The memory slipped away like water through her fingers, no matter how much she grasped for it. The only explanation was Valda had done something to her and brought her here. Laurelanna's heart ached for her family. She slammed her foot against the door, and the nurse whirled around. Her lips tightened into a fine line, and she pointed a finger.

"Back to bed or we'll put you in the cage!"

"Cage?" Laurelanna whispered.

A horrific wail split through the silence. Laurelanna shuddered and shuffled away from the door as an awful realization came to her. She'd once heard of a woman forced into an asylum against her will. It was a place of torture and death. Laurelanna prayed she was wrong, and this wasn't one of those places. She had to get back to her

husband, Jeremiah, and their baby boy, Jacob. He was only a few months old and needed her. She had to find a way home and Laurelanna knew she would, no matter what. Then Valda would pay for putting her in here. Laurelanna closed her eyes to gather energy to use her wind gift, but when she did, only a light breeze swept across the room instead of the gust that she meant to use to knock the door open. She glanced down to find her garnet necklace gone and sighed. The gemstone gave her gift more power and if Laurelanna didn't have her necklace, then how would she escape? Laurelanna wasn't sure, but she never gave up easily. She would find a way out.

As the months dragged by, Laurelanna's determination to get back to her family grew. Tonight was her tenth escape attempt via the tunnels underneath the asylum. She couldn't afford to get caught again. Each time they found her, they put her in the cage. Laurelanna vowed to make it out this time. As she moved through the tunnel, Laurelanna tried to imagine what she would do to Valda for taking her away from her family and putting her in this hell. But Laurelanna wasn't violent, and all she could picture was slamming a jail cell door in Valda's face.

Laurelanna pulled a sweater she'd taken from a catatonic patient tighter around herself as she plunged further into the darkness. The tunnel underneath the asylum seemed to go on forever. She had to find a door somewhere before they realized she wasn't in her room. To guide her, Laurelanna slid a hand along the cold wet wall and the dampness soaked into her bones, but she didn't care and trudged on.

Soon, the thump of footsteps echoed behind her. Laurelanna froze in place and spun in a circle. There was nowhere to hide. The sound came closer until a dim light appeared. A nurse and an orderly stood mere feet from Laurelanna.

"Found you." The nurse lunged and grabbed Laurelanna's arm.

"No! Please, you don't understand! I don't belong here!" Laurelanna struggled and lifted her hands to use her wind gift, but it was no use without her garnet necklace. Laurelanna continued to fight until her feeble body gave up and the orderly wrapped his arms around her. Laurelanna gasped for air and hung her head. She was too

weak from the months of poor meals, no sleep, and torture disguised as treatments.

“They all say that. Take her back,” the woman said.

The tall burly orderly slung her over his shoulder.

“No!” Laurelanna wailed.

“And put her in the cage to think about what she’s done.”

“Doc, said -.”

“Shut up and do it!”

The man lumbered away and carried Laurelanna up the steep stairs as she pounded his back.

“Don’t do this, please!”

They entered a small space big enough to be a utility closet. The tiny dark room stank of urine and feces. He shoved her into the tiny cage, which was only big enough for a person to stand or sit, then he locked the door. Laurelanna shook it, and her frustrated cries echoed down the hallways until she slumped onto the seat exhausted.

Days later, Laurelanna stared up at the ceiling of her room. Her entire body ached from the three days in the cage. It had been the longest they’d kept her in it, and only gave her small amounts of water to survive. Something tight bound her hands to the bed, and a tall figure in a black cloak stood beside her.

“Hello again, Laurelanna,” Valda grinned down at her. “It’s been too long.”

Laurelanna fought the restraints despite the pain that shot through her arms and back. Despite her kind nature, she wanted to strangle Valda for taking her away from Jeremiah and Jacob and trapping her here.

“Why not kill me?” She asked through gritted teeth.

Valda paced back and forth in front of the bed as she wound a scarf tightly around her hand. “It’s much better to watch you suffer.”

Laurelanna lifted her head off the pillow. “I did nothing to you!”

“You’re from one of the five sisters. I must eradicate their descendants. My mother will be most proud of me when I tell her and take The Toven back to her.” Valda moved to the side of the bed and sneered down at her.

Laurelanna's eyes widen then narrowed them to slits. "The Torven? The five sisters banished it."

"I'll remedy that. I have plans for your son."

Laurelanna violently shook her head as she strained to sit up, but the wrist bands held her down. "No! I won't let you! I'll escape this hell and when I do -!"

Valda laughed again and untied the restraints. "Go ahead. See what happens."

Laurelanna lurched toward Valda and wrapped her hands around Valda's throat, just as she screamed for help. The door flew open, and a nurse rushed in. An orderly joined her and pulled Laurelanna off Valda.

"She tried to kill me!" Valda screeched. She touched her throat and taunted Laurelanna with a wicked grin as the nurse and orderly wrestled Laurelanna into submission.

"We'll deal with her." The nurse motioned for the orderly to take Laurelanna out of the room. "She's overdue for a treatment."

"No!" Laurelanna's heart hammered in her chest as she fought and slammed her foot down onto his foot. The orderly's grip loosened and Laurelanna yanked herself free, then raced down the hallway. But another nurse tackled her to the ground before she could get out the door.

Valda pressed a handful of coins into the nurse's hand. "See that she gets the help she needs."

The nurse grinned and placed the money into her pocket. "Oh, we will."

The second nurse and an orderly dragged Laurelanna down the hallway to a room and slammed the door. Her agonizing screams filled the asylum for weeks until one day they stopped.