The night was unusually dark and still, clouds coating the sky in a sheet of grey-black. The only light came from the flashlights of the guards as they scanned the perimeter, the only movement from a single, cloaked figure who ran through the shadows, hiding from the eyes in the sky.

Lenna clutched her bundle tighter to her chest as she knelt in the shadow of a tall statue. Her breath came hard and fast. This was her only chance. She could not fail. She peered over her shoulder. One of the flashlight beams moved slowly past the nearest stretch of fencing, as if casually checking the grounds for escapees.

For her.

Lenna’s arms clenched at the thought, squeezing her bundle tightly. A, faint whimper came from withing. Chagrined, she loosened her grip and pushed the cloth away from the tiny face inside.

“Sorry, sweetie,” she whispered. “Don’t you worry, Mommy’s got you.”

Soothed, the baby yawned and nestled deeper in her mother’s arms. Lenna gently brushed her multi-colored bangs out of her eyes, feeling her heart clench at the thought of the fate her tiny child would face. Except she wouldn’t have too - Lenna was going to make sure of that. She would find somewhere else - a place where her daughter’s beautiful hair wouldn’t matter, a place where her twelve fingers and toes wouldn’t be seen as odd. For the hundredth time, she brushed her fingers through that strangely long and silky hair, counting the shades. Lavender...violet....heather… periwinkle….mulberry and plum…. She was just so beautiful. She enfolded her in her arms once again.

She was going to escape tonight. One way or another, she wouldn’t spend another minute in this constricting life.

She checked on the guards again. No one was in sight. It was now or never.

When Lenna took a step from the shelter of the statue, a light fell directly on her, and an automated voice blared. “Stop, and desist. Stop, and desist.”

Guards came from everywhere, black masks and faceless beings closing in. Lenna darted into the small garden to her right. More guards appeared, sprouting from bushes and leaping from behind trees. She stumbled to a halt, trapped, frantic. She dropped to her knees, putting herself between the guards and her baby. “Please,” she begged. “Please, don’t do this! She’s not an anomaly! She’s a human being! An innocent baby!”

The guards didn’t stop. Lenna searched for a way out, but found none. “Please! Can’t you see?”

A sharp sting in her back made her stiffen. A sedative seeped through her system, blurring her sight and loosening her grip. “No…” she pleaded softly. “No…!”

As she slumped over on the cold, wet grass, hands reached between her arms and pulling the bundle from her grasp. The baby squalled in the damp air. Lenna felt the cry as a physical pain.

I’m so sorry, baby, she thought, as consciousness slipped from her grasp. I didn’t want this... I tried!

The last thing she saw was that beautiful hair, spread wide in the breeze as the guards carried her baby away.

Iris… she thought blearily Mauve.... Sangria…

The darkness overcame her, and she knew no more.

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When Rae woke, she lay very still with her eyes closed. She’d been having the strangest dream she could ever recall… something about an old rocking horse she played on when she was little… except its mane and tail had looked all purple, identical to hers. It had turned and looked at her. Its face had been decorated with a drawn-on mustache and eyebrows, like what some of the boys had done to the paintings in the hall. She had started to laugh, when suddenly the rocking horse grew giant fangs. It leaped and pinned her to the ground, snarling. That was when she had remembered how those boys had vanished for three days afterward, and how they had never been quite the same since, and how her old rocking horse had been burned as a punishment when she’d tried to build a fort to live in the woods. She stopped laughing and started crying, and the rocking horse began crying with her.

When she was sure she remembered the whole dream, Rae opened her eyes and sat up. She reached for her bedside table and picked up a cheap notebook with an annoyingly orange cover. She flipped to a blank page, and, after taking out the pen from the binding, wrote:

Fourth Month, Third Day, of Great Broden’s Twenty-Fifth Year of Rule

Dream Record of Brealynn Anomaly

I dreamed I was painting a wall purple. Then the paint fell over, and painted the whole world purple, and I ruled it forever and ever. Except everyone drowned in the paint, so I wasn’t ruling anyone but myself.

She set the pen down, and reread her work, bland and pointless, with just enough rebellion to make them mad, with just a bad enough ending to keep them from punishing her. Pleased, she slammed the notebook closed and set it back down. She flung back the sheets, letting the brown-grey bedspread float gently down like a parachute. Somersaulting onto the floor, Rae cartwheeled the four feet over to her closet, swung the door open while balancing on her hands, and pushed and flipped simultaneously so her knees hooked over the overhead bar and she dangled upside over her clothing. Panting, she grinned happily down at rows of identical down shirts. “Awesome,” she whispered. “Just like normal.”

After getting dressed, Rae flung the sheets back on her bed, tucking the corners and straightening the cloth. With a sigh, she flopped down, arms spread to stare at the white ceiling. “I wish things would be abnormal, sometimes,” she whispered at the ceiling, like she was sharing a secret. “I wish things would actually happen.”