

**Defender
Series Book
One:
Rhyverside**

Laura McConaha

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Chapter One

Defender Book One: *Rhyverside* Laura McConaha

Prologue

*“Chaotic scenes, burning fyre, raging storms,
Lighted skies, falling stars, all shall mark Her coming.
Dark of night, Revenge’s time, Light’s seeming end.
Will Light prevail, or will Dark infuse the world?
Stroovkah prowls, spirits stalk, shadows sneak,
The time has come for Her to appear,
The Fated One, the One with burning hair and emerald

eyes.

Her place, Her fate, Her destiny: Defender to us all.

Daughter of a different world, yet Daughter of this one
too,

She’ll fight, or we shall die, die a horrible death of
slavery.

Revenge seeks his namesake; we shall suffer should he
win.

The tides are shifting, the sides of Light and Dark
clashing,

Dead shall be seen once more, spirits will haunt us all,
If only She can stand and fight and Defend us,

We cannot fight and win our own, only She can save
us.

When the days turn Dark, seek to the heavens for the
Mark,

The Mark that proves She is finally among us,
Look to the skies for the Eye that shines brightly purple.
And beware, those who choose the Dark,
She will come and rend you from the world;
She shall destroy with blinding fyre, glistening ice,
hurling winds, flashing lightning.

Only one stands in Her way, one who loves yet hates
at once,

One who yearns to be free from evil, but a slave of it
nonetheless.

Only Fate can tell what and how this fight shall come
to an end.

Choose the correct side and suffer not forever more.”*

Lanae rolled the scroll back up and placed it back on the shelf. For some reason it had drawn her attention when she first entered the room of her teacher. It had been a long time since she could find the will to return to the place where she'd been taught the Right of Seeing. The rah she'd found her teacher dead changed her life. She tried to stop her thoughts from going to that rah, but they slipped past her control...

It had been a normal sun ker rah, the sun shining brightly as it rose. Lanae was rising from bed to start the rah when there was a thud from her teacher's room above her. She rushed up the stairs to see what had happened. Lying on the floor in a pool of blood lie Lanae's teacher, dead. Standing over her was a Ver'inth, its dark skin making it seem like it was a moving shadow in the room.

“Alnae!” she screamed, throwing herself into the room

and pulling the dagger she always kept on her, even in sleep. With a sweeping slash, she caught the surprised Ver'inth in the side as it jumped away from the Seer. "What do you want?" she yelled as the intruder backed toward the broken window and she moved forward into the room in pursuit.

"Isn't it obvious? I've come to end the prophetic words of your teacher. She tells too many things inspire hope in those who wish to oppose my K'lah. K'lah Shaedyn is the ruler of this world by rightful blood. Guinevere is nothing more than a farce. I am only doing what I must to stop the spread of support for Guinevere," the Ver'inth replied with a maniac grin.

Lanae felt a pang of fear at Shaedyn's name. Nothing good happened when he was mentioned. "But why did you kill her?" she asked.

The Ver'inth's smile grew as he paused at the entry of the window. "I told you why, to stop her stupid sayings of a 'Defender' and a 'Marked One.' K'lah Shaedyn's reign shall never end! No one can stop him. Remember that and think about which side you belong to, or else I might come back and add you to the growing list of dead Guinevere supporters." With that, he opened his wings and jumped backward before catching himself and twisting away from the two story building. The Ver'inth flapped his fyren wings once and rose into the aer.

Lanae stood staring after the murderer before thoughts of Alnae filled her mind. She turned to look at her teacher and realized it was much too late to do anything to save her. Alnae was covered in blood from numerous cuts and

stab wounds. The one to her heart had instantly killed her.

...Lanae shook her head to bring herself back to the present. This wasn't the time to be thinking about the past. She was in danger. Shaedyn's followers had become more open about killing those who supported Guinevere. It wouldn't be long until they came for her. She was one of the last Seer's on Rhyverside which made her a perfect target for those searching for blood.

Looking around the room that had once belonged to her teacher for the final time, she raised her hand and called fyre to it. With some urging on her part, she sent the ball of flame atop the words of prophecy Alnae had spent years collecting and recording by her own hand and turned as they began to burn. Quickly, she left the small home she'd lived in for most of her life and didn't look back as smoke poured out of the upper window that was still broken from the Ver'inth's attack.

She entered the forest that surrounded the front of what had once been her home and quickly walked along the unkempt trail, her eyes on the lookout for anyone and anything. She only had a second's warning after she heard the snap of a bowstring. Lanae jumped to the left, though she wasn't fast enough. The arrow pierced her left shoulder with enough force for the head to go all the way through.

She screamed in pain, her voice disturbing the birds and winged Fynn into flight. Sinking to her knees, she gathered the Al'kihd into her body and waited for her attacker to appear.

"So, it was true. The Seer's student decided to return

and destroy the prophecies so those following Lord Shaedyn wouldn't be able to decipher them," a male voice stated as her attacker came within her line of sight.

"Hah, you think I did it for that reason?" Lanae sneered with clenched teeth as agony ripped through her at every breath.

"I really don't care why you did it. I'm just glad the rumors were true. It made finding you very simple. So, shall I get this over with?" he wondered, lifting the bow up to his eye level and drawing back the arrow.

Lanae looked up at the Cylax'ian with contempt. "You can kill me, but nothing will change the fact that the Defender is coming. Shaedyn is doomed. No matter what he does to stop the Defender from coming, She will come; it is destiny," she said.

The Cylax'ian snarled in anger and released the arrow, instantly killing Lanae. Her last thought was at least her pain hadn't been dragged out.

"Guinevere, how long are we going to let these attacks continue? Everyday more are killed because they follow you," Helen said leaning forward in her high backed chair to look at the Alayan sitting across from her.

"Helen, you know we can do nothing. Shaedyn has gained power we know nothing of. He can go to places we have never even heard. We cannot compare in power though we are of the same race," Guinevere stated. She

folded her arms across her chest as Helen sat back and ground her teeth in frustration.

“Guinevere, we cannot let this continue. We have to give those who follow you support,” Ii’lorah said in her deep, alto voice.

“And what do you suggest we do?” Guinevere inquired looking at the brown haired Alayan.

“Send some of us down there to at least save some of those who are being attacked,” Ii’lorah replied.

“Yes! If we could do that, we could save so many of them,” Helen said enthusiastically agreeing.

“Now hold on for a moment. You know it is against our laws to interfere with the things that go on down on Plensaimelle’krhynn. We are their gods and goddesses and must be careful of what we do. We cannot be the ones to write their histories,” Guinevere said, her eyes gazing fiercely at the two of them.

“Is Shaedyn not already doing that?” Helen asked, her green and white eyes flashing with quiet anger.

“Helen, there is nothing we can do about him. He is no longer one of us, even though he was born as an Alayan,” Guinevere stated again, her voice serene. “I know it angers you, but we can do nothing until She comes.”

“And when is that going to be? It has been such a short time since the prophecies were written, but look at all that has happened already! The K’liiah are extinct to Rhyverside. The Ver’inth are not far behind! All of them are already in service to Shaedyn.”

“Helen!” Guinevere snapped, slapping her fist against

the table as the other's tone grew angered. "I know it makes you angry, but all we can do is wait. The Defender will come when it is Her time to do so. I cannot say for certain when that will be. I would if I could, trust me."

"I just hope it is soon. Rhyverside cannot last like this for much longer. Shaedyn is too powerful for any of us to fight. We need Her to come and put an end to him," Ii'lorah said.

"Ii'lorah, Helen, go to Lu'niiah and Daerhys and watch for Her coming. Do everything you must to find Her," Guinevere said into the silence that followed Ii'lorah's words. "Look for the One with emerald eyes and flaming hair as the prophecy says She will have."

"When we find Her, what do we do?" Helen inquired.

"Come to me and I will give you things to give Her that will aid Her in her journey to defeat Shaedyn," the woman replied, a look of hope shining in her eyes as she thought of the one who was destined to come. And hopefully soon. The people of Rhyverside needed Her, the Alayans needed Her, all of Plensaimelle'krhynn needed Her to come. She was the only one with a chance to stop Shaedyn's power.

Staggering away from the cliff wall, the cloaked figure continued moving, his steps faltering. He'd been running since the moons rose. Fatigue gripped him and he fell to his knees, the world turning grey at the edges.

Curse him! Curse that foul...foul...Argh! I can't even think of a good enough name to call him! he growled within

his mind, images of what he'd like to do to the one who'd nearly cost him his life filling his imagination. *I will never trust a Telle'gaerhyn again!*

Pain lanced up his ankle as he placed it wrong on the slowly descending slope and he tumbled in a heap of cloak and pack. He kept the cry of agony from ripping out of his throat and instead, slowly stood. There was no time to rest, though he desperately needed it; he had to get further away before his followers found him and what he kept hidden in his little pack. It was a tiny thing, but it held great power. He'd stumbled on it nearly by accident.

He pushed thoughts of pain from his mind with some difficulty and continued on his way, only the small limp testimony to the twisted ankle. This was dangerous country he crossed, even though he should have felt safe under the protection of the imposing yellow-green trees of the Arkine. Shaedyn's lands bordered the forest making travelling in them many found unpleasant. He was only here out of necessity. That traitor Telle'gaerhyn had told him that a certain wagon company would be waiting for him at the end of the trail when in fact, it had been a trap.

It'd taken him nearly three moonturns of Drhynn, the Mother Moon, before he had been able to escape his imprisonment with the followers of Shaedyn. While with Shaedyn's minions, he had heard of something their leader carried with them that their K'lah was anxious to receive. He vowed if he were able to escape, he would take whatever that thing was with him so Shaedyn couldn't get his hands on it.

It was still a little hazy how he had gotten free. Being hit on the head by a thick branch tended to do things to the mind. All he remembered was a great flash of some color he couldn't be sure of and then his bonds had been released and everyone within the group went scattering. It was around that time he was hit over the head and knocked to the ground. That was what had kept him from being caught a second time as most of those captured with him had been once their guards recovered.

Wearily, he came to a small clearing in the seemingly never ending forest that was marked by an ancient, scraggly tree that would have been beautiful in its prime. A disease had damaged its heartwood and the only thing that seemed to hold it rooted to the ground were the saplings around the base of its trunk. A really strong wind could easily have knocked it down, or a bolt of lightning, but thus far it had been fortunate.

On the other side of the giant, crooked tree the path he'd been searching for finally came into view. But he was too weary to continue, much less celebrate. He had to rest and regain his strength. His captors hadn't fed him all that well, and he was too weak to go any further. With the last remaining energy he could find, he sat beneath the dying tree and pulled his cloak tight about him, trusting that its muddy-green color would keep him hidden from anyone passing. Subconsciously, he gripped the strap of his bag before sleep claimed him.