

// CLASSIFIED • GAIAN DEFENSE AGENCY



The Oracle Dossier

+ Graphic Novel Teaser

Chapters 1–2 • Characters • Places

John R. Kowalsky

// BRIEFING

Welcome to the Verses

Desmond Bishop, a retired Gaian investigator, is pulled back into service when Terran agents begin abducting children across Gaia.

I've been living in this world for a long time now... it was really cool to finally see it visually on the page, kind of like seeing my story through somebody else's eyes. This is a look at the people and places of Oracle, plus the first two chapters as comic pages. No spoilers, I promise. Hope you enjoy it.

— jrk

Inside: a spoiler-free dossier of the people and places of *Oracle*, followed by the first two chapters drawn as comic pages.

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// 01

Characters



// FILE 01

Desmond Bishop

A retired Gaian investigator who would rather be left alone at his lakeside cabin. Tall and fit, with short straight hair, stubble, and a few old scars he doesn't talk about. Gruff, but wise when it counts. Desmond wields flux, the gift of moving between Verses, and it is less a weapon to him than part of who he is. When Gaian-linked children start disappearing, the agency he left comes looking for him, and the case turns out to be far more personal than he expected.



// FILE 02

Celia

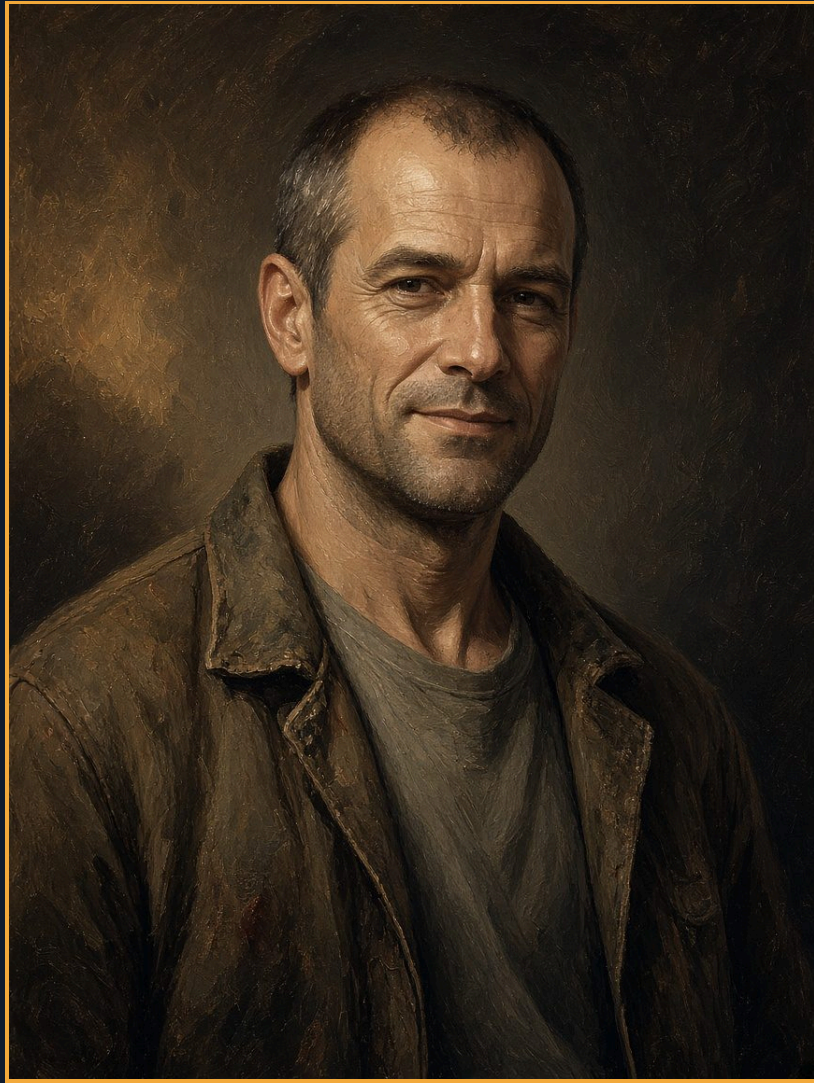
Desmond's only daughter and an agent of the Gaian Defense Agency, skilled enough with flux to land right inside her father's field. Dark wavy hair, usually pulled back, a dark GDA jacket, and a tongue sharper than most weapons. Her banter with Desmond is affectionate, sharp, and habitual. She values his praise and has no intention of depending on it. When the Council needs someone to drag Desmond back to work, they send the one person he can't easily refuse.



// FILE 03

Kid (John Keller)

Eleven, nearly twelve, and living a mostly ordinary life with his uncle Jack near the Adirondacks: school, friends, baseball in a uniform a little too big. Hair that refuses to lie flat, hoodie, one hand always in a pocket. "Kid" is a toddler nickname that stuck. He is frightened, clever, and analytical, the kind of boy who reads games and systems the way other kids read comics. Someone in another Verse has taken a very particular interest in him.



// FILE 04

Jack Spader

Kid's uncle and guardian, and the most ordinary man in a story full of extraordinary ones. A former military operator of average height and build, an everyman who looks better suited to sweatpants, an old T-shirt, popcorn, and a beer on a Saturday night. Jack stepped up when Kid needed a home, and he is the practical, human anchor of the boy's life. When the multiverse comes knocking, he has no powers, just training, stubbornness, and love.



// FILE 05

Julia White

Prime Minister of Terra and the human face of its technology. Regal, elegant, and dangerous, with trademark platinum-white hair. She looks flawless, kept in prime condition by the nanites she champions. Julia resents the flux gifts of Gaia and believes technology can correct the imbalance. She sees bodies, powers, and identities as systems to be fixed. She is also Desmond's ex-wife, which makes everything worse.



// FILE 06

Wizard

An older ally with a white beard, wild wispy white hair, and "a face made for concern and bad news delivered with care." A long life has left Wizard with genuine friendships in places officials never look, especially the undercity of Civitas, where he trades goods and information and owes as many favors as he's owed. He builds and modifies armor and gear, but his help always has limits. Warm and funny, he never lets a joke get in the way of the mission.

// 02

Places



// FILE 07

Taos Lake, Gaia

Desmond's retreat in the Sixth Verse: a cabin above a moonlit shore, set behind a line of dark pines. Fog hangs low over the far side of the water and softens the Cairosian Mountains "until they looked less like stone than a wall someone had forgotten to finish." It is cold, quiet, and lonely, a place for a man who wants to stop being needed. The porch lights still come on when he climbs the stairs, and the house still knows him.



// FILE 08

Cairos

The great city of Gaia and home of the Gaian Defense Agency. From above, Cairos is all "white towers growing out of black stone, hanging gardens planted along the upper terraces, the river folded through the city in a line of silver." It is a place built by people for whom crossing between Verses is a gift rather than a machine: graceful, confident, and proud. Beautiful cities have a way of making people forget how fragile they are.



// FILE 09

Civitas, Terra

Terra's capital, a city that "seemed less built than stacked." Hyper rails cut white arcs between towers and window grids climb into the dark above polished corridors and planned walkways. Below that orderly face lies another city of soot, repair stalls, drainage routes, and a working undercity economy run by people the official systems overlook. Those people know the service routes and blind spots that the planners forgot. In Civitas, what matters most is often whatever nobody is watching.



// FILE 10

The Oculus

Terra's most closely guarded secret is a ring that rises out of a cavernous hangar, "white at its center and huge enough to swallow a building," burning with "a pale, depthless light." Gaians cross between Verses through flux, a gift of the body. The Oculus is what a civilization builds when it lacks that gift and refuses to accept the difference. Nobody outside Julia's inner circle knows exactly what it's for. Those who find out don't like the answer.

// 03

Chapter 1

Sixth Verse — Taos Lake, Gaia.

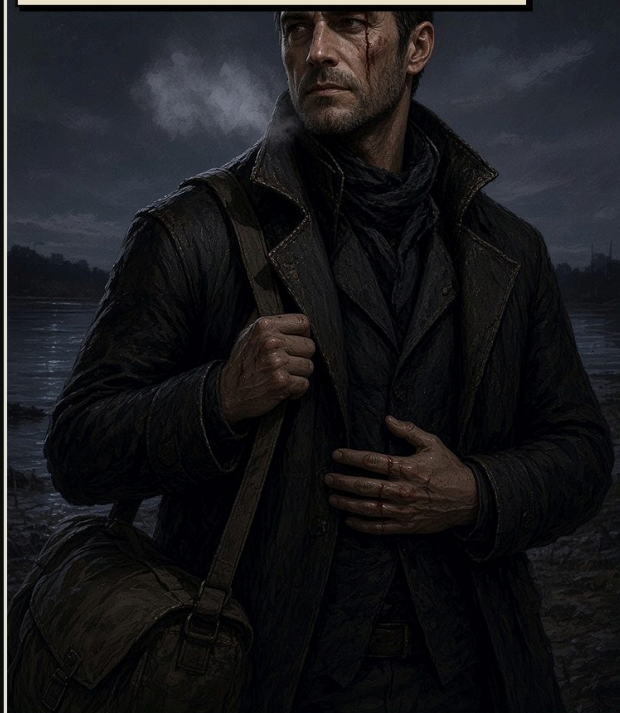


The man appeared out of thin air on the moonlit shore, and the lake kept lapping as if nothing had happened.

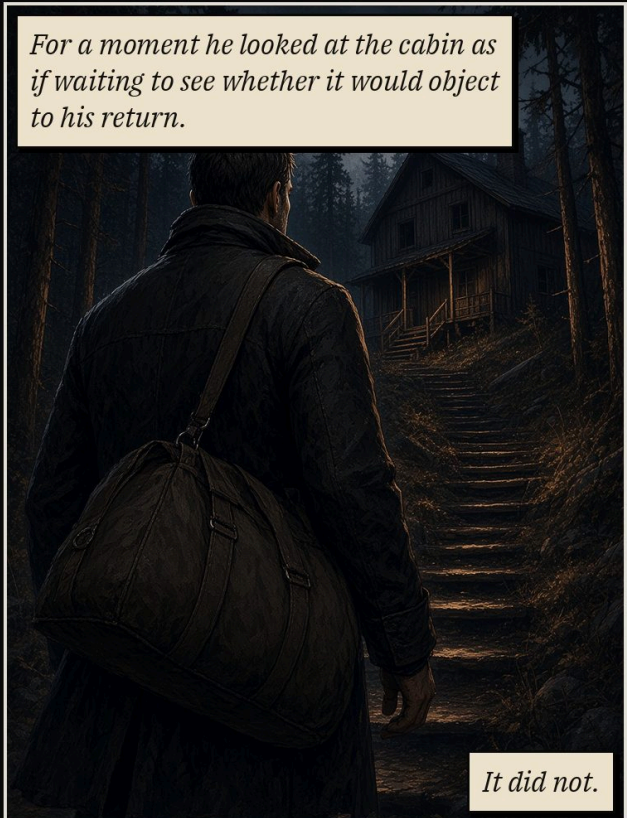


...until they looked less like stone than a wall someone had forgotten to finish.

His breath came fast enough to cloud the cold air. Blood had dried in his hair...



For a moment he looked at the cabin as if waiting to see whether it would object to his return.

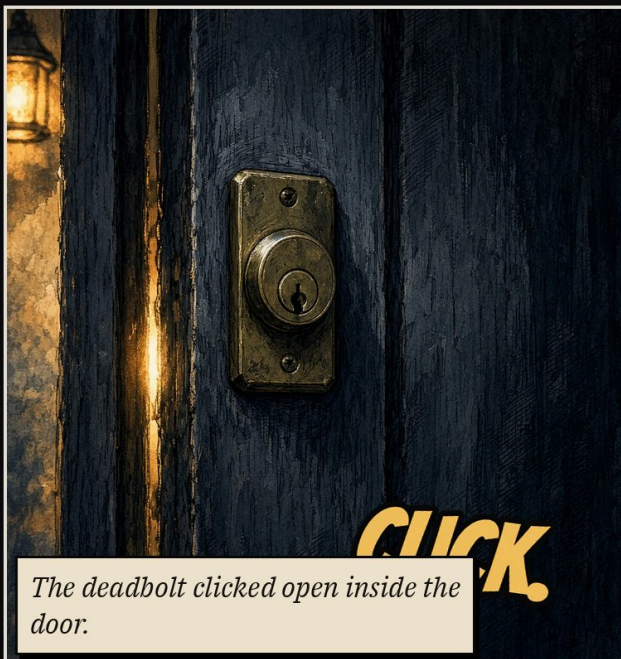


It did not.

The porch lights snapped on when he reached the top.



He kept his expression flat and made a small motion with two fingers.



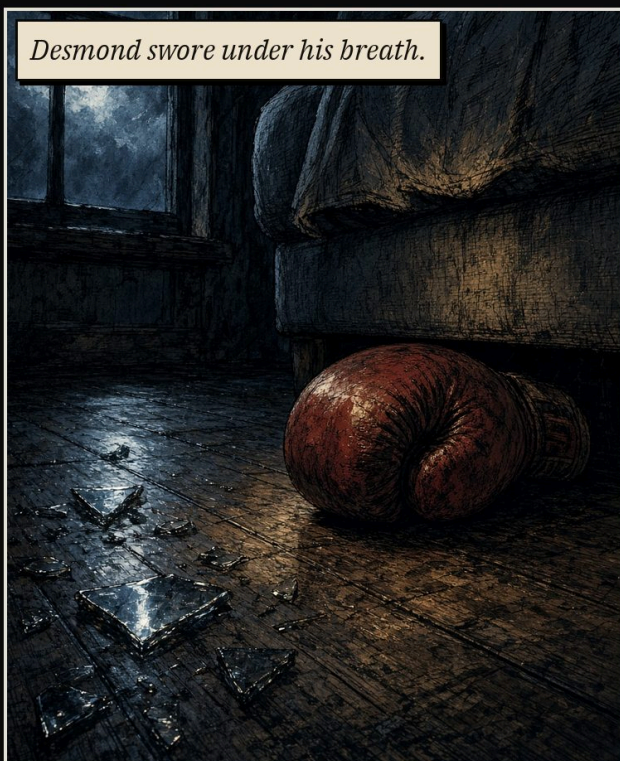
The deadbolt clicked open inside the door.



The house took him in dark and quiet.



Pain caught beneath his ribs before he could complete the throw.



Desmond swore under his breath.



In the bathroom, he turned the shower on...



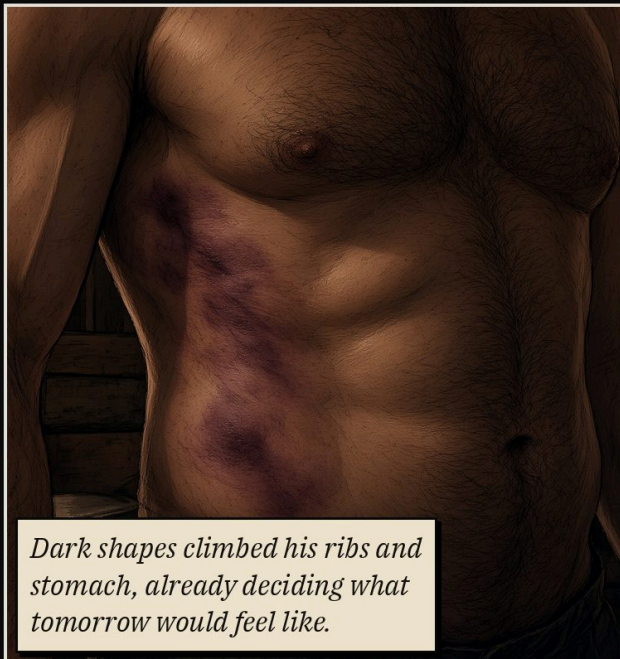
Cold struck his ribs and stole the breath he had been trying to control.



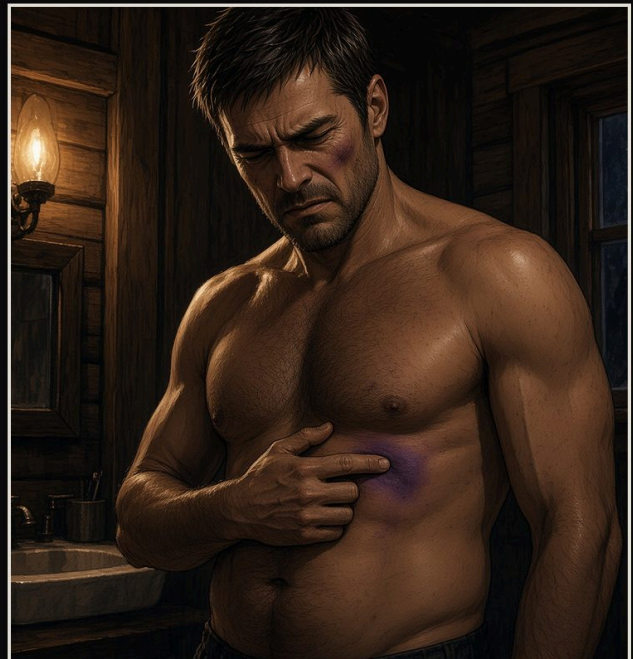
He watched it go without much interest.



In the mirror afterward, it looked almost ordinary—an angry line beside the beginnings of a black eye.



Dark shapes climbed his ribs and stomach, already deciding what tomorrow would feel like.



That's what you get for trying to run with the young guns, old man.

The face looking back at him did not seem persuaded.

...glass on a floor had a way of finding bare feet, and there were some kinds of mess that became worse through neglect.



He turned on the lights.



Desmond went to it slowly.

The dark-haired teenager on his right remained clear, all sharp cheekbones and reluctant amusement.



...a spiderweb of cracks across her face until it was impossible to tell where her expression had been.



Then the smile reached him, small and late. It did not stay long enough to become anything else.



Then he went for the broom and dustpan.

// 04

Chapter 2

Sixth Verse — Sophia, Gaia.



The zip drive opened in a sphere of red and blue light at the edge of a sleeping street.

He stood still until the jump stopped working through him.



The shudder began at his shoulders and ran down through his legs. He breathed through it and listened.

Sixty-seven percent.



Enough to get in, take the girl, and get out if he did not waste time.

His thumb paused over the selector before settling it on stun.

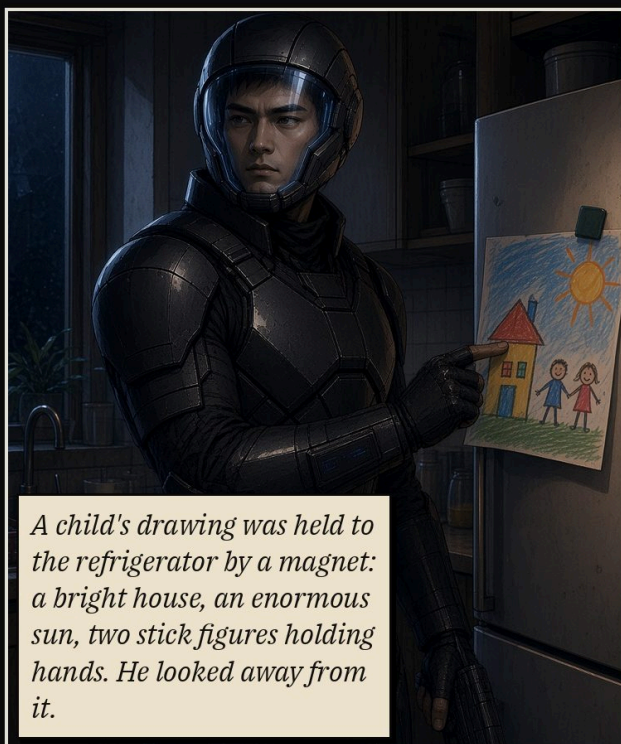


No lethal force unless necessary.

Through his visor, the house became two warm shapes against the dark.



...less like people and more like positions on a map.



A child's drawing was held to the refrigerator by a magnet: a bright house, an enormous sun, two stick figures holding hands. He looked away from it.



A child stood in the doorway at the end of the hall.

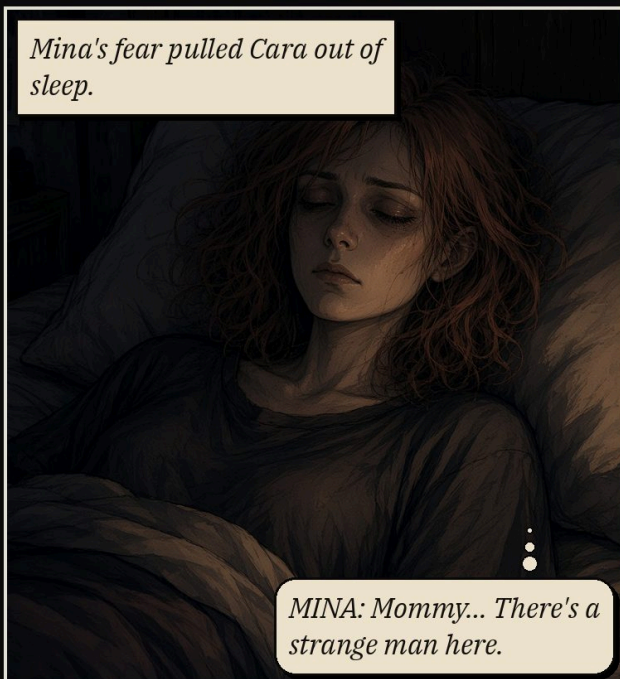
He tried on a smile.

She ran.



So much for quiet.

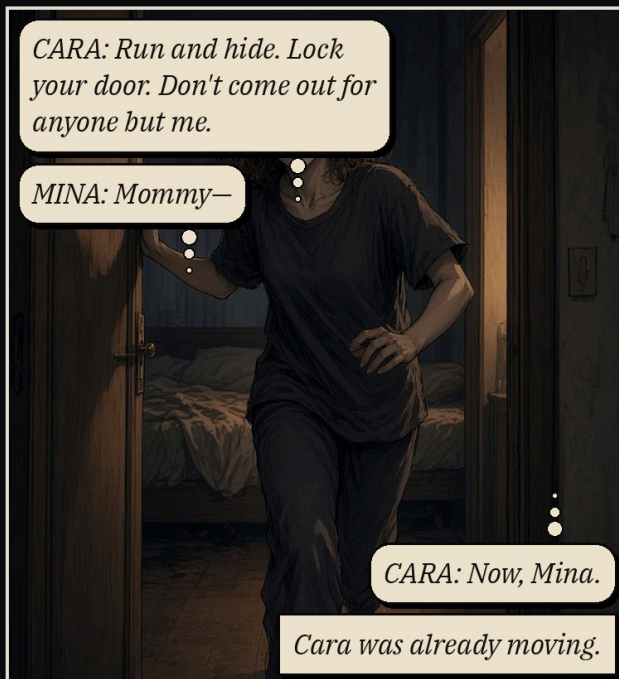
Mina's fear pulled Cara out of sleep.



MINA: Mommy... There's a strange man here.

CARA: Run and hide. Lock your door. Don't come out for anyone but me.

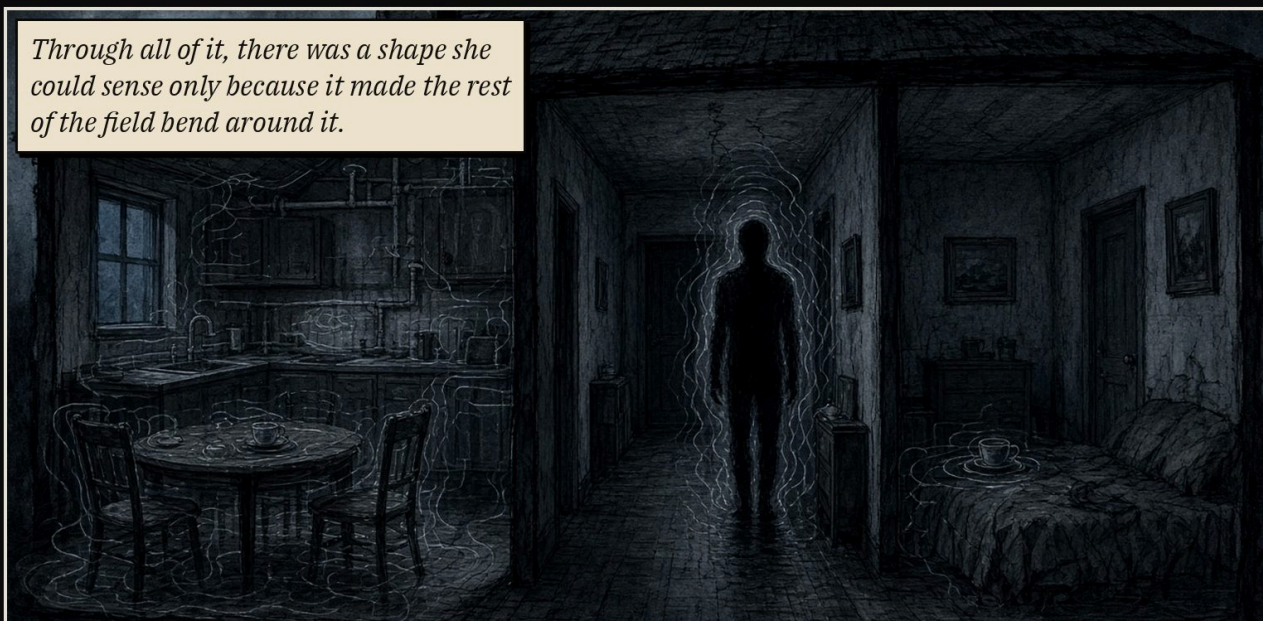
MINA: Mommy—



CARA: Now, Mina.

Cara was already moving.

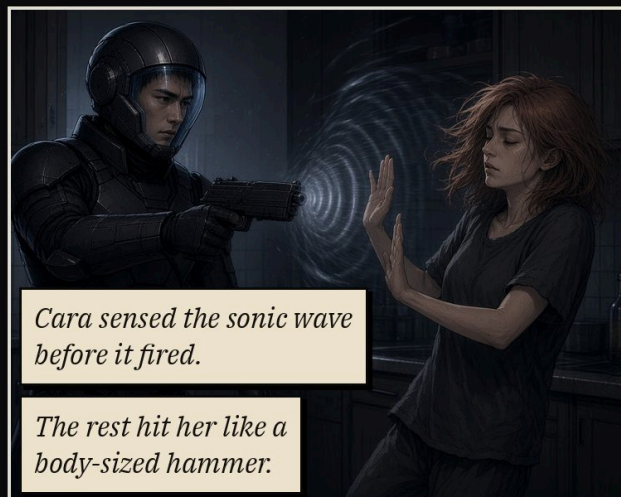
Through all of it, there was a shape she could sense only because it made the rest of the field bend around it.



A Terran. Here. On Gaia.



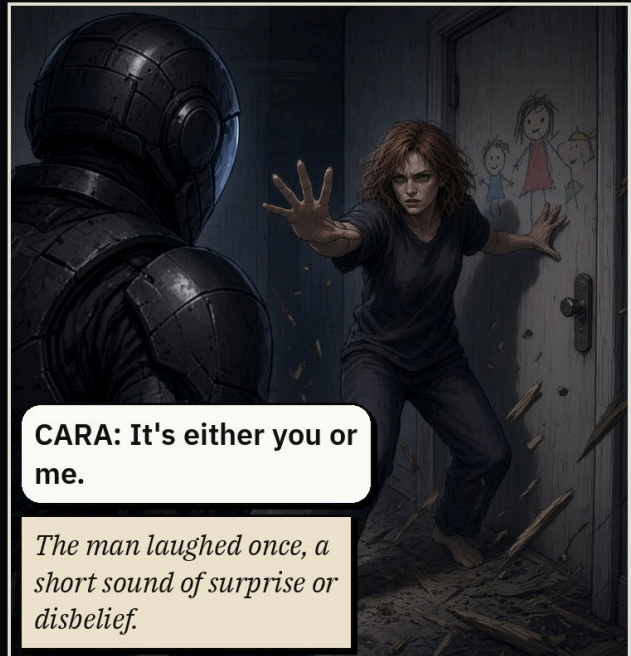
...dark armor swallowing the weak spill of night through the windows.



Locked.



Good girl.



CARA: *It's either you or me.*

The man laughed once, a short sound of surprise or disbelief.



Cara sent the room at him.

The stun took the breath from her.

The Terran stood over her.

She managed to lift one hand.



The next flash took the hallway away.

The armor had held.

That was all he needed to know.

The blast drove the door inward.

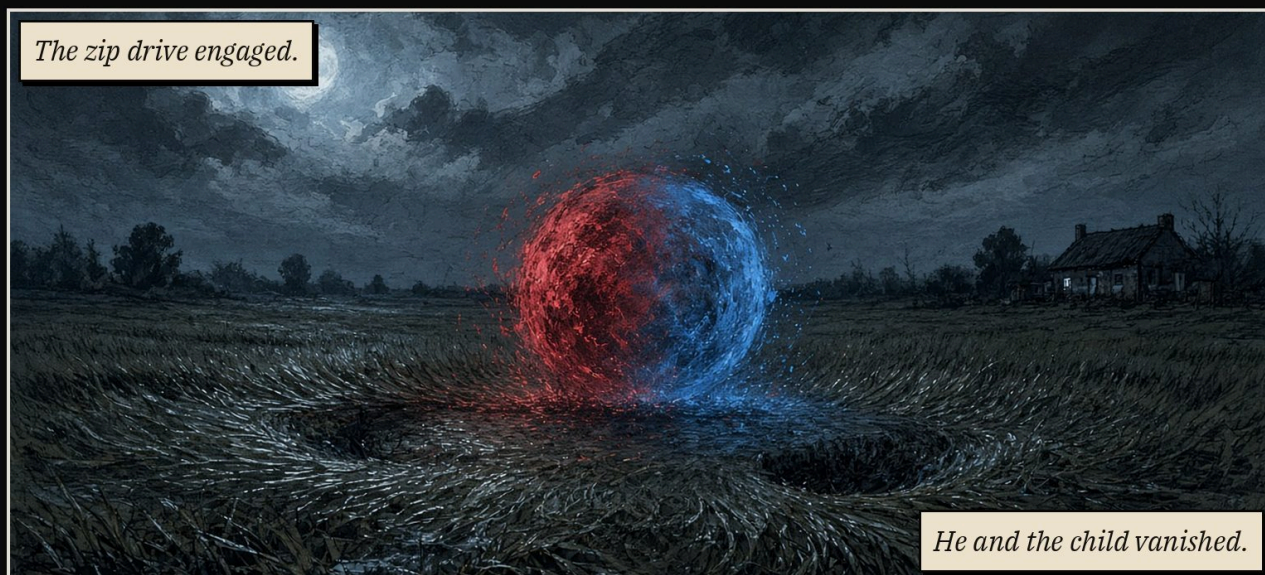
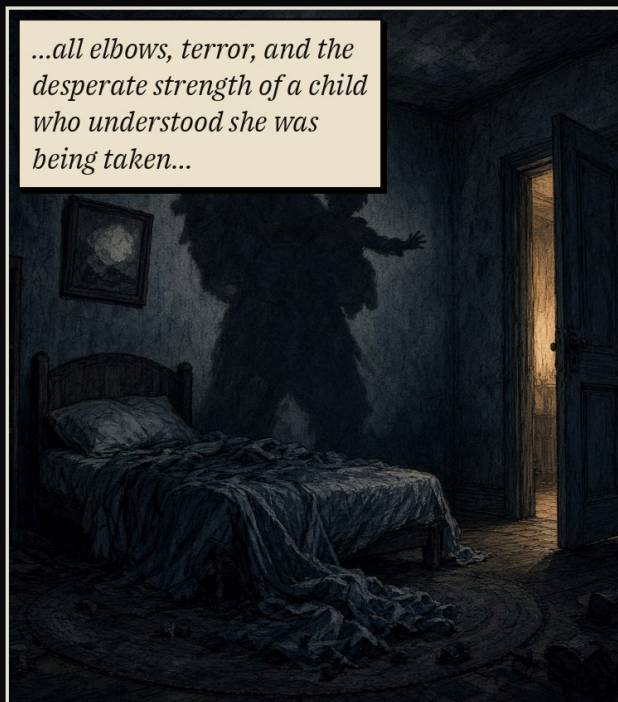
WHUMP.

...a space interrupted in the middle of being a child's room...

TERRAN: Come on out. I won't have to hurt you.

The words landed wrong the moment he heard them.

TERRAN: I'm not going to hurt you.



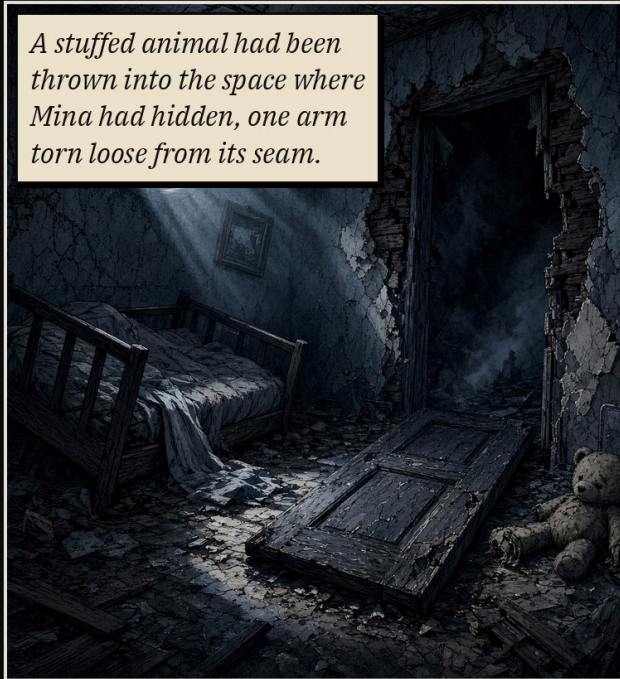


Cara woke to smoke, dust, and memory arriving all at once.

CARA: Mina?

The house gave her nothing back.

A stuffed animal had been thrown into the space where Mina had hidden, one arm torn loose from its seam.



It had not been enough.

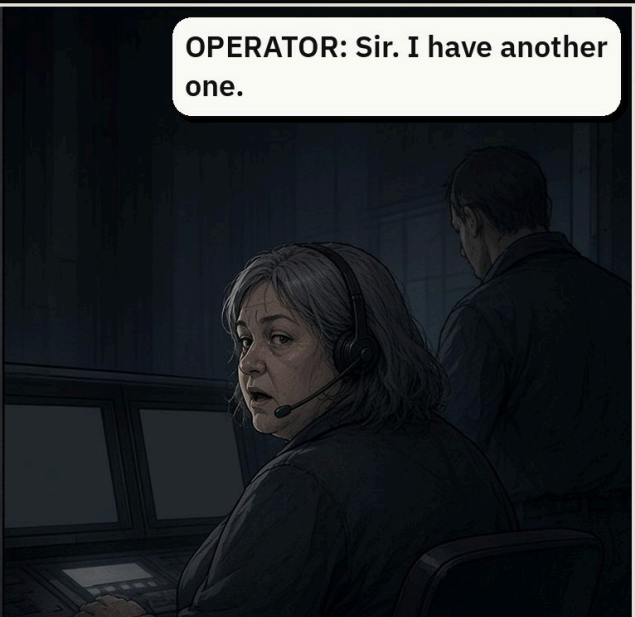


She cried until the shapes blurred.

CARA: It's my daughter. She's been kidnapped.



OPERATOR: Sir. I have another one.



// END OF FILE

The story continues.

If you want to know what happens after Chapter 2, the full story is in Oracle, Book One of the Multiverse Series.

Thanks for reading... I'd love to hear what you think. Shoot me a message on X
[@johnkowalsky](#)

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