

The FABULOUS ADVENTURES of

KISO MARAVILLAS

BOOK I: Gaia's Prophecy

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I am Kiso Maravillas, daughter of Aralar Maravillas Blanca and Kata Bel-Escalofrio, granddaughter of Arbol Maravillas and Cyan Blanca. Born on the Planet Aqua, part of the 7th Solar System of the Nivean Galaxy, Universe of Eleven Dimensions. I am in the year 44 AP (After the Prophecy). What follows is the history of my planet. The story of my lineage.

"I solemnly swear to tell it just as it was told to me"

Universal Code of the Chroniclers

Chapter I

TERRA and AQUA

In a far and distant Galaxy, within a solar system of nine planets, there is one planet as blue as the sky. It is abundant with life. A planet where the various species have intermingled in a most extraordinary unfolding of unpredictable and unrepeatable events.

Aqua was the blue world. The bluest of all the blue planets. There was no land on it. There was a time when it had fertile soil, crisscrossed with thousands of great rivers, where towering trees and a host of species lived together. It was known then as Terra. Then one day, the rivers mysteriously began to grow. They grew and grew, and the earth began to shrink, and shrink, and shrink away.

And Terra became known as Aqua.

It took many years for it all to fade away. In those years, the inhabitants of Terra were forced to part with the nature of their species. They needed to learn to live as one with the water. First it was in the marshes, swamps and mangroves, and when all other options were gone, they built huge floating platforms, which came to pass for new states and cities.

For a while, some tree species still grew above the water level and continued a peaceful existence, until the last of them were wiped out and turned sterile. All the land animals learned to swim, then later, to breathe underwater, and thus began a New Era in which the blue was no longer air but water. The birds remained in limbo between the two worlds until, little by little, they finally

abandoned the surface. The species known as humans, well, that's another story.

Most of the adults of this kind lived embedded in fear. In fear of drowning, of the people hiding in the waters and of all that could befall them below. The bravest humans organized submarine expeditions, but very few ever returned to the platforms to tell of their adventures, and so the word spread that the water hid unimaginable dangers. Over time the idea that it was safer to stay on the surface than to explore the depths took hold in the habits of the platform people, and in this way, the human race became self-confined, willingly trapped inside floating concrete cages.

The new fate to which humanity found itself sentenced seemed incomprehensible to some. They didn't understand why Terra had changed so abruptly, and so they tried to figure why it had happened.

They carefully studied and consciously experienced their dimensional reality, and wherever possible learned about and probed others. By looking into their intuitions, introspections, meditations and inspirations, they somehow envisioned an explanation that took shape from other worlds and other times, incomplete though it was. Everyone knows any scientific theory that takes too long to show a serious factual basis quickly winds up becoming a belief, faith or religion.

This collection of theories which the wise ones and thinkers had pulled out of abstract knowledge were known as *The Prophecy*, and the Prophecy was recited:

Earth

Life

Water

Will return to their place

A solid foundation on which to raise a reasonable and reasoned theory. In all likelihood, with a little time, hard work and inspiration, they could have come up with a remedy for the terrifying and distressing situation in which they all found themselves. However, the wise ones and thinkers wilted before the powerful, ignorant assembled institution that dictated their new way of life. By using manipulation and distorting the facts, the Upper Echelons silenced the wise ones and thinkers' voices, and transformed the Prophecy into mere *old wives tales*.

The Great Ship was the first of seven platforms put to sea. The huge pontoon, like the other six, would come to be transformed into an artificial island, eventually one of the largest and most populous. People of all continents had gathered there before the earth disappeared completely. Many ships and boats sailed among these floating deceptions, trading and transporting goods and people of every kind.

Humans began their lives over. Some went back to what they already knew, building an even more imperfect replicas of their previous social mores and way of life. They went on with the same stupid things. They drew lines on the ground which became streets, erected residential buildings, government institutions, offices. They waited patiently for things to return to normal by course of nature. These people were known as the *Adapted*, but there were others who were never integrated. They stooped under the weight of their

sadness, wandering around and staring at the ground, crying, sighing and then slowly went tumbling into depression or utter madness.

How curious that the planet's other species did not face so many problems when it came to adjusting to their new lifestyles. But then, how significant.

To meet the basic needs of the Platforms, particularly to obtain food, they looked all around and what did they see? The ocean.

A system of buckets and very long pulleys was developed whereby earth was mined from the depths — earth they would use to cultivate small kitchen gardens in the new towns. The rest of the food they fished. Literally. Numerous inventions were designed, some of which were highly productive and all the more harmful because of it. One thing that these ingenious inventors had yet to realize was the universal law that states: For every action there is a reaction. The boomerang effect.

They fished with rods, nets, tridents, with exploding mines and any combination these. One invention of which they were particularly proud, because of its high productivity, was a complex and destructive system of braided nets with poisoned hooks and harpoons, nicknamed *The Hand*. *The Hand* devastated and destroyed all that lay before it, be it animal, plant or inanimate object. Without discrimination: whole schools of salmon, bodies of rock, flocks of now underwater birds. All that fell into the gear, or succumbed to the mines, was gathered and brought up to the platforms for further examination and use.

When the old land animals started to be fished from the sea, some Platform Dwellers developed an inexplicable and irrational refusal to eat them,

and these few people were known as *The Softies*. Despite this repulsion or precisely because of it, a new morbid trend came to be. The animals were extracted from their environment not for use as food, but just in case. Just in case of any potential usefulness, they were taken, dissected, studied. Not caring whether the creatures were alive or dead, they tore off their skin and removed their bones to use them in a thousand different ways. The leftovers from their studies would be put into an enormous pot and added to an infinite soup that simmered always in the cooking fires. Almost all of *The Softies* were fed this broth, mired in willful ignorance. And the waste? It was thrown overboard, calmly as you please, leaving behind a stinking trail of death and destruction.

The exact reason is not known but, day by day, human nature had become vicious, dark, violent. It inflicted discomfort, damage, injury, harm and pain on everything near it. The floods only worsened this condition.

While they still could, boats roamed the forests of trees and stocked the platforms with their fruit, seeds, foliage and woods. Then one day something else came to an end: the trees drowned, becoming wooden, waterlogged giants, unable to go on living. Even still, humans went on pretending that nothing had happened.

There were some who couldn't.

Gray Beard was a very old man, the oldest old man that anyone had ever met. In the land times, he was a distinguished figure in human thought, recognized on a planetary scale. When humans began to lose their goodness and the assaults, abuses and murders appeared, Gray Beard, horrified by the

virus spreading among the people, decided to get as far away from such vileness as he could, set sail and leave to decay a world that was doomed to collapse.

When life began to reorganize itself again on Ships and Platforms, Gray Beard was an enthusiastic and hopeful participant in the construction of a new social order, but soon realized that, again, greed and cruelty was taking hold of his kind. He read the greed in their eyes and smelled blood on their hands and breath. The devastation of the oceans was beginning. Just as the earth had been devoured, so the sea was being consumed. The pointless deaths of the thousands of creatures hoisted aboard the platforms, again reminded the wise man of just why he had sailed away, and decided to isolate himself from those who had once been part of his same species.

The burly wise old man had lost all the hair on his head from thinking. He listened and weighed the theories of the Prophecy but he was not entirely swayed by them. It lacked a key piece that would complete it, an argument that would function as a catalyst to bring these disparate ideas together. The Prophecy. He had also been unable to conceive of it, or devise it, or even to think of it. His motives were distant. Human nature's path kept him sleepless at night and sleepwalking during the day. In fact, he would not, could not, continue among these people any longer. He could not find within himself sufficient energy to investigate the field of the Prophecy. He felt with a sharp pain in the bottom of his heart that this civilization was not worthy of a prophecy that could save it, this culture of which he was a part, deserved to disappear. Silently, he turned away his gaze and focused the incredible power of his intelligence on a different purpose.

"When nature closes one door, it always opens a window," he would muse on his countless walks along the edge.

As he had done whenever he needed an answer in the land times, he got up in the early morning and sat always in the same place, at the same time, waiting for Inspiration to come to his side and whisper answers into his ear. She had never failed him. He knew for certain that now, when he needed her most, she would not desert him.

It was believed in the Upper Echelons that Gray Beard had gone mad, that he had lost his mind. From morning till night, he sat on the ground, looking out over the ocean, waiting for an answer from the beyond.

"The water will return to its place, Gray. It will disappear in the same way it came," they would always tell him while they went about their usual routines, just waiting for a miracle.

Gray Beard knew that it wouldn't happen spontaneously. The so-called Prophecy had a screw missing and something told him that none of the inhabitants of this floating world would be able to find it.

Patience is the mother of all virtues.

The Universe is movement.

Everything finds its place. Gray knew this better than anyone.

One fine morning in spring, the fruits of his perseverance produced results. Inspiration whispered into his brain the solution that for so long he had been awaiting:

"You always knew, old man. You're right. The truth is under water. Jump in and trust."

Gray Beard had no more time to lose. He rose from his corner, paused before the little ones that watched him everyday, and trusted.

His last dry words went down in history as the ramblings of a madman for some. Those wanting to understand saw the light at the end of all the darkness. There was one little boy in particular.

"Children, do not be afraid. Never be afraid. You are the future." With these words he dove, with great momentum, from the Great Ship into the sea.

One of the children who witnessed the scene froze, wide-eyed; something in his brain went *click*. From this moment on, his life would no longer be as it was before. Arbol Maravillas, red-headed and playful, was eight years old and spent twelve more years thinking about what he had seen that morning.

Arbol was an orphan. He had no father or mother. In the whole world, he had only his grandfather. But it had not always been this way.

The first major river to break its banks was the Lino River, the longest on the continent. It overflowed and swept away many of the cities along its shores. Many died and many others were left homeless. In those early days, the only houses that seemed safe were in the mountains. But that's all it was, an appearance.

Before long, unthinking, unscrupulous people organized themselves into groups and devised ways in which to profit from the devastation of others. Travelling aboard small fishing boats, they arrived at the flooded ruins and looted all that seemed of any usefulness. When nothing remained but wet logs and there was nothing left to bleed dry, new and depraved ideas began to

surface in their minds, their eyes ran towards the only place they could: the mountains.

At that very moment, Arbol was a happy child of five, oblivious to the horror that the floods were causing. He lived on a coffee farm in the mountains with his father, his mother and grandfather: Monte, Selva and Campo Maravillas.

Arbol loved his parents dearly and worshiped his grandfather. The thing he loved most in the world was accompanying his grandfather Campo every morning to visit the plantations, listening to old family stories while they walked. Arbol was impatiently awaiting the arrival of his new brother or sister and wished with all his heart that, this time, his mother would not have any setbacks during her pregnancy. The awaited moment must have been getting closer and closer, for Selva's tummy looked ready to explode. All he could think of was that finally he would have someone his size to play with.

One hot morning after *The Lino Disaster*, as the event was known, Campo and Arbol left for their usual stroll around the plantations. Selva was organizing some boxes of aid for those affected by the catastrophe and Monte busied himself in the garden. In spite of the widespread tragedy, the life of the Maravillas went on quietly on their mountain coffee farm.

But everybody knows that nothing lasts forever, especially happiness.

Four individuals like starved dogs, with filthy dark hands, teeth and souls, stormed the farm.

Their first step was to consider the building's livability; the second, its inhabitant power of resistance.

They spread out like an octopus' tentacles, ready to devour its prey. One and Two went in ahead. Just to be sure, Three and Four waited around the back.

When One and Two kicked in the door to clear their way in, Selva knew that this was no courtesy call, but quite the opposite. She put down Arbol's old sweaters that were in her hand and tried to run toward the back door to alert her husband in the garden. Before she could reach it, Three and Four entered. They were smiling, each with a sledgehammer in hand, and halted her flight as she reached the china cabinet.

"We'll all be better off if you behave, darling..." One whispered threateningly as his other henchmen laughed and scratched at their groins. Selva knew the modus operandi in such gangs and the fragility of her pregnancies, so she couldn't help it. The stress tore at her womb and she felt a trickle of blood running down her inner thighs. She knew she was going to lose the baby as she went into early labor. Under normal circumstances she could have tried to give birth, given her advanced stage of pregnancy, but it was too late for both of them. She and her baby had no escape, but little Arbol could be saved if she kept the evildoers occupied.

Frightened, but with her head cool, she bit the inside of her lip hard. She tasted her own blood, and with all the speed and power her heart could muster, she snatched up a soup bowl and hurled it at the One's head. Thwack! The porcelain frisbee smashed against the outlaw's face, opening with its edge a gash on his forehead that bled heavily.

"Fat hillbilly pig! Grab her!" One shrieked.

Two, who was not too bright, froze, watching the incredible spectacle with his lip hanging out. Three and Four tried to approach her, but Selva made herself a windmill, her arms like its blades in a gale, launching from them all kinds of dishes and utensils. She couldn't miss. She nailed them with a couple of flying coffee cups, a soup tureen, a pitcher, a few wine glasses and a bunch of silverware, but she didn't notice that One and Two had already recovered from their shock and were coming up behind her.

"So we've got a rabble-rouser, do we? Well, we know what to do with a rabble-rouser..." brayed One as he kicked her all over her body, hard as a donkey.

Selva fell down in pain. A pool of blood quickly formed on the ground. There was no point in even tying her up. After the beating and the stress, she bled out like a sad river. It wasn't long before the evil thugs realized that someone would be coming to see what had happened after the racket they had made. They hid briefly behind the door.

Sure enough, Monte had heard the shouting and banging from inside and hurried toward the house. Unfortunately for the Maravillas, the garden was further away than it had ever seemed to them before. Monte's classic blunder was rushing into the house like a tidal wave, for the stealth of a lizard would have served him better. Two and Three were expecting him, their knives in hand behind the back door, and as soon as he came through it, he was slaughtered with lightning speed, right before his wife's emptying eyes. There was no hope.

But some life and anger still pulsed through her veins.

"NO...!" she stammered enraged, and a supernatural power filled her tiny body; pulling herself along the floor she came to a carving knife, but One and Four were watching her calmly from a distance. Smiling, they walked slowly over to her, One with an axe in his hand. Without thinking twice, he stuck it in her head, ending her life at that very instant.

That was the precise moment when a chill shot up grandfather Campo's spine, and jumped into the child Arbol's, and both knew in their souls they had been struck by an irreversible catastrophe. They looked into each other's eyes, turned their heads to the farm and observed from a distance as the four bandits dragged two lifeless bundles from the house. A fire was burning.

Campo Maravillas was an intelligent, grown up person and he realized that to go back was pointless. He took a tight hold on his grandson's hand, and after a deep sigh, brought himself to speak the hardest words he had ever uttered:

"Little one, do not worry, Mommy and Daddy have gone on a long journey. It will be a very long time before we see them again. Until then, they've asked me to take care of you. Do you remember the stories of the great vessels we heard? Well, we're going to live on one of them." A tear ran down his right cheek. Another overflowed in his heart.

"Will Mommy and Daddy be there waiting for us, grandpa?" said Arbol quietly but with eyes flooded heavily with tears.

"No, son, they won't," sighed Campo, "We won't see Mommy and Daddy ever again in this life." The grandfather did not quite know how to explain the death of the body to a five year old. "Do you remember when I told you that

grandma went across the lagoon and that once you cross it you can never go back?

The small boy nodded silently from sorrow. The older man went prattling on because of his pain.

"All of us in this world will visit it at one time or another. Today it was your parents' turn. Now you and I are together, and you don't have to worry because our time has not arrived yet."

Hand in hand, they started to walk, leaving behind a river of tears. Their destination: Silver Port, where it was said that a Great Ship would depart for a new horizon.

Campo and Arbol were part of the first large group of people to emigrate to the massive ship. Since the incident at the farm, Arbol had developed a deep sense of distrust toward humans. This suspicion, slumbering in his chest, oozed a raw pain that enveloped his heart, and only at night when no one was looking, not even his grandfather, escaped as saltwater in his tears.

Years passed and this way of feeling took hold in his heart, like an oak rooted in dark soil. When he discovered the experiments and dissections men performed on other creatures, he was ashamed to belong to the human race. Ever since he had been very little, he had felt the suffering of others in his own heart, and so when he learned where the steaks he ate for lunch came from, his stomach clamped shut and he refused to eat meat anymore. Arbol had become one of *the Softies*, the broth eaters, the laughingstock of the disruptive kids in his class.

When he turned fourteen, Gray Beard appeared, only for a second, his powerful torso rising to the level of the Great Ship, and his commanding voice seemed to be calling from the rooftops that he was still alive. Gray Beard's feat of survival spread like wildfire among the massive Platform's inhabitants, and those who had heralded the drowning of the old wise man were forced to eat their words.

Arbol never stopped thinking about Gray Beard. He understood his message now better than ever, and knew it was pure fear that had enslaved society. He could not abide the Maravillas being a part of it. He tried every kind of argument to convince his grandfather to follow in the steps of the wise Gray, but Campo had always been a dry man and had never learned to swim; the mere prospect of immersing himself underwater put an end to the idea.

"My son, you go. Do not miss the opportunity to live free. I cannot even swim, how do you expect me to survive in the ocean? You go, really."

The attitude by and large was to cover up the truth about Gray Beard. Young people began to consider the possibility of following the wise old man beneath the surface, but the Upper Echelons could not allow this sort of abandonment of the established institutions.

If the young people migrated to the depths, then who would shoulder the weight of the way of life they had worked so hard to continue on the Platforms? This brilliant social organization that would keep the human race going until the arrival of the miraculous Prophecy. It needed strong young arms to raise the nets and cut up *the creatures*, to work the harvest and trade between ships. Young people would have more children and thus extend this way of life.

As a result, it was easier just to manipulate information for their own their plans, and the story of the wise Gray Beard was altered into another mere oceanic fantasy.

What had once been:

Gray Beard is alive. He surfaced and rose up to the level of the Great Ship to prove that an alternative undersea life existed.

Became:

Beware of entering the water because there are aquatic creatures that will drag you down to the depths for the rest of time.

Only the eyewitnesses knew the truth about what had happened, and even they began to doubt their memory. As in the most ancient kinds of censorship, it was forbidden to talk about Grey Beard's appearance in public.

An official truth was decreed, a guideline announced by the Upper Echelons for the rest of the people to follow:

The seabed is extremely dangerous and even swimming on the surface is not advised.

Secretly, the Upper Echelons needed to act. How had Gray Beard survived down there for so long? What if there was a resource to be exploited that was slipping away? They decided to set in motion a secret plan to explore the underwater depths.

Fortunately, not everybody obeyed what the Upper Echelons said. There was still some resistance to their orders from those who distrusted the irrational written rules dictated by the rulers and blindly followed by the majority. They developed their own theory about old Gray Beard. An explanation that, year by year, was passed from mouth to mouth.

The fable was born of an old, gray-bearded man who lived at the bottom of the sea, in love with a white dolphin, and from their love was born a powerful, amphibious race.

For weeks, Arbol neither ate, slept or walked. He daydreamed about going down to the bottom and living with Gray Beard and his dolphins, apart from the cruel humans. The other kids laughed at him and called him *Softy*. They told him that the old man had drowned, that what had come to the surface was an extremely dangerous sea lion with gray fur. They told him that he was gullible, a dreamer, and that people like him should be very careful.

Time passed and when Arbol was twenty years old, Campo died from old age. Hand in hand with his grandson, in the last vestiges of life, he uttered his final words.

"My son, I'm going with your parents. There are no excuses left now. Summon the courage you have stored up inside and travel to the bottom of the sea. You are a Maravillas. You were born to live great things. The future awaits."

For twelve years Arbol had been thinking about Gray Beard and he could not wait any longer. It angered him to know that for most of his memory he was caged up on a floating concrete platform, surrounded by sadists.

The only pure heart he knew had died.

He needed to take action.

Put aside all the mere talk.

One damp, sunny morning, he summoned all the courage flowing through his veins, asked his parents and his grandfather for strength, and filling

his lungs with as much air as he could fit inside them, he too plunged into the sea.