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Archive of Broken Moons

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Introduction

We drift between broken moons, our windows rimmed with powdered stone and the faint fluorescence of a failing halo. The ark was meant to be a circle, a wheel where each spoke found its balance; now it is a necklace with missing beads. We have learned to live with the gaps—by stitching, by story, by the records we keep and the lives we reconstruct when loss opens its hungry mouth. I work where the gaps are named: the Library of Continuities, a chambered heart at the center of our slow-turning world.

My first clue was a biography that refused to stay bound. It appeared ordinary—a dockworker from Selene Sector, father of one, tutor in math on off-shifts—but three lines contradicted a shipment ledger I had memorized as a child and a prayer I did not know I remembered. Then there was another, and another: a botanist with two distinct apprentices graduating the same year; a midwife who delivered herself; a Founder who signed a register eleven years after his recorded death. These were not harmless misprints. In our ark, the social fabric is woven from such entries. If the threads misalign, the cloth shifts on our shoulders.

We have always mended ourselves. After hull breaches and harvest failures, after the flare that erased an entire residential ring, after miscalculations that we retell as fables to ward off repetition—we bring people back as best we can. We call it Reconstruction: the piecing-together of a life from backups, testimonies, residue in the devices we carry and the language we share. Sometimes we do it with consent, often without the luxury. Sometimes the returns are faithful, sometimes they are approximations dressed in the old names. And sometimes, I have learned, they are curation masquerading as compassion.

Our founding story has mass. It bends the path of everything that moves inside the ark. We repeat the catechisms: that the Founders were singular in foresight, that they saved us from a gravity well of cruelty, that their design is as close to a circle as we can come. Yet on the edges of the memory stacks, beneath the confident fonts of our civic murals, there are notes in the margins—versions of events that do not agree with the hymns, decisions explained not by benevolence but by expedience. I was trained to be a neutral steward. But an archive is not a museum of untouched fossils; it is a machine that shapes the future by deciding which bones to polish and which to grind into fertilizer.

What follows in these pages is not a manifesto and not a formal report—our Council has little use for either when food quotas tighten. It is, instead, a ledger of mysteries and their consequences: case files and witness accounts, building schematics that

contradict each other, lullabies that function as legal codes, love letters smuggled in the footnotes of maintenance orders. I assembled them as any careful librarian would—by cross-referencing lumen plates and decay-prone paper, by triangulating inflection and rumor, by walking the long corridors until the boots of my curiosity wore thin.

You may read these as stories, because they are. In a closed world, narrative is our atmosphere: we breathe it, we pressure-seal with it, we suffocate without it. Stories allocate rations as surely as schedules do. They draw the borders of kin and stranger when blood alone cannot. They determine who is permitted to mourn, and who must be grateful. When a biography changes, a family changes, and when many biographies shift, a society steps into a new orbit even if the hull never turns.

Each chapter is a door. Some open onto rooms I know intimately—the overheating server vaults we call the memory stacks, where I first ran my hand across the spines of false lives. Others lead to spaces I entered as an intruder: the vacuum gardens where algae sing in low tones; the afterschool classrooms where Founders' Day is rehearsed until belief becomes muscle memory; the sealed corridors of "broken moons," sectors we abandoned in fact but continue to inhabit in tale. You will find dead ends and secret passages, contradictions that cannot be fully reconciled. Hold them all. The ark is made of partial truths under compression.

If I am a protagonist, it is only because someone must carry the lamp. The conspiracies I uncovered are not a single serpent winding through our home but a tangle of roots beneath our feet. Some were nourished by fear, some by love, some by the simple accounting of scarcity. This is not an exorcism. It is a record of how we became ourselves and a suggestion that we might become something else.

Read, then, with the skepticism due to any curated collection, and with the tenderness owed to the reconstructed. We are all, in some measure, amended editions. If you find yourself in these pages, mismatched and luminous, know that the discovery is not an accusation but an inheritance. The moons around us are broken; we are still in orbit.

CHAPTER ONE: The Shelves That Remembered Wrong

The Library of Continuities was not some grand, echoing vault of ancient knowledge. It was a functional space, pragmatic and climate-controlled, tucked behind the humming conduits of Sector Seven. Its shelves were not crafted from polished exotic woods, but from recycled alloy, stamped with the manufacturer's mark of a forgotten pre-Collapse corporation. The air, filtered and recirculated, smelled faintly of ozone and repurposed plastic, a scent I had come to associate with quiet dedication. My name is KAI. I am the Senior Custodian of Biographical Integrity, which, in simpler terms, means I look after the stories of who we are.

My domain was the biographical archives, the meticulously curated records of every life lived and reconstructed aboard the *Ark*. Births, deaths, marriages, skills, sector assignments, minor infractions, heroic saves—all digitally encoded and cross-referenced, but also, critically, printed on lumen-infused paper and bound into physical volumes. Call it an analog backup, or perhaps a homage to the old ways. Either way, it meant I spent my days among spines and pages, my fingers tracing the tactile ridges of ink on synthetic vellum.

The anomaly, when it first presented itself, felt like a grain of grit beneath a perfectly smooth lens. It was a biography of Elara Vance, a dockworker. Her entry was unremarkable: born 234 CC (Colony Calendar), married 258 CC, mother of one son, Jax, who later became a hydro-engineer. She was lauded for her tireless work ethic, her steady hand with cargo lifters, and her surprisingly nuanced understanding of lunar tidal mechanics – a skill she reportedly tutored to young apprentices in her downtime.

I was performing a routine scan of sector-specific biographies, cross-referencing skill sets with projected labor needs for the upcoming quarter. Selene Sector, where Elara worked, was always short on qualified lifting specialists. Her record popped up, solid and consistent, until I reached the entry for her son, Jax. It listed his birth year as 260 CC. This was fine. But then, a few lines down, detailing Elara's community service, it mentioned her receiving a commendation for organizing aid relief during the 'Great Algae Bloom of 257 CC.'

This was where the grit appeared. I knew the Great Algae Bloom. Everyone did. It was a staple of our history lessons, a period of near-famine due to a critical bio-remediation system failure. It occurred in 257 CC. According to her biography, Elara was married in 258 CC, and her son was born in 260 CC. Why did a seemingly normal

biography highlight her participation in a relief effort that preceded her stated marriage and the birth of her only child by several years? It was not an impossible timeline, certainly. But it struck me as odd that a narrative otherwise emphasizing her family life would feature a highlight from a time before it existed.

My job wasn't to question, per se, but to maintain. And maintenance often involved subtle corrections. Perhaps a typo in the date of the commendation, or a misplaced entry. I accessed the digital database, bringing up Elara's full file. The paper biographies, though tactile and reassuring, were merely reflections of the central archive. Every detail was mirrored, every line encoded.

The digital file was identical. 234 CC birth, 258 CC marriage to Kael Vance, son Jax born 260 CC. And, without alteration, the 257 CC commendation for the Great Algae Bloom.

I clicked open the sub-files. The commendation itself was a scanned certificate, dated 257 CC, bearing the authentic seal of the then-acting Sector Governor. Her signature, a surprisingly elegant script for a dockworker, was clearly visible. I cross-referenced the marriage certificate. 258 CC, Kael and Elara Vance, signed by a Justice of the Peace. And Jax's birth record: 260 CC, same parents.

All records were internally consistent. Each document, in isolation, seemed flawless. Yet, together, they created a faint dissonance. Why would the biography choose that specific pre-marriage, pre-child event as a highlight, rather than, say, a family holiday or a personal achievement during her domestic life? It was a stylistic choice, perhaps, but it felt... off. Like a carefully constructed sentence with a single, awkwardly placed adjective.

I moved on, telling myself it was nothing. The ark was old, its records vast and sometimes imperfect. Data corruption happened. Human error in transcription happened. But the small, nagging sensation persisted. The shelves, in their silent rows, seemed to hold their breath.

A week later, the same dissonance returned, this time with a botanist named Aris Thorne. His biography detailed a brilliant career in xenoflora cultivation, culminating in his mentorship of two exceptionally promising apprentices, Lyra and Kael. The biography explicitly stated that Lyra and Kael graduated under Thorne's direct supervision in the same academic cycle. I was checking his curriculum vitae against the current roster of botanists for a grant application.

Lyra's graduation certificate was dated 271 CC. Kael's was also dated 271 CC. Thorne's record indicated he retired from active teaching in 273 CC, living out his later years experimenting with low-gravity hydroponics until his death in 289 CC. All perfectly aligned, on the surface.

But then I saw it. Kael. Not the same Kael, surely. But the name triggered a faint memory. Kael Vance. Elara Vance's husband. And indeed, Kael Thorne, the botanist apprentice, was listed as having married a 'Lyra' in 272 CC and having a child, *Jax*, in 275 CC.

My breath hitched. *Jax*. Not *the Jax*. It couldn't be. The names were common enough. But the specific pairing of names - Kael and *Jax* - was too coincidental to dismiss. I pulled up the first Elara Vance file again. Her husband was Kael Vance. Her son was *Jax Vance*. His birth year: 260 CC.

Now, Kael Thorne, botanist, was listed as marrying a Lyra and having a son, *Jax*, born in 275 CC. The names were identical, and the relationship structures - Kael marrying Lyra (or Elara), having a son named *Jax* - were eerily similar, despite the fifteen-year discrepancy in birthdates for the two *Jaxes*. And, crucially, Aris Thorne's biography stated his apprentice Kael graduated in 271 CC. This Kael, therefore, would have been an adult in 271 CC, certainly old enough to marry in 272 CC and have a child in 275 CC.

This Kael could not be the Kael Vance married in 258 CC. The timelines simply did not align. If Kael Vance married in 258 CC, he would have to have been at least eighteen or twenty years old, placing his birth somewhere around 238-240 CC. This would make him far too old to be an apprentice graduating in 271 CC. Yet, the coincidence of names, and the familial structure, was unsettling.

I stared at the two entries, the digital light reflecting in my glasses. Two Kael-*Jax* pairs. Two families, eerily similar in nomenclature, separated by a generation and occupying entirely different professional spheres. It was as if the *Ark* had recycled its names, not just for individuals, but for entire family units.

I felt a prickle of unease. It was more than a typo. More than a stylistic oddity. These were full, robust biographies, each internally coherent, but when placed side by side, they suggested a strange echo. A glitch in the fabric of personal history.

My fingers, usually so precise, fumbled slightly as I accessed the cross-referencing module. It was designed to flag inconsistencies, to highlight identical names or birthdates across different sectors. It rarely threw up anything more serious than a clerical error or a temporary duplication during a data migration. I fed it the names: Kael, Elara, Lyra, *Jax*. And the relevant birth years, marriage dates, and professional fields.

The module whirred, its internal processors working through the vast dataset. The screen flickered, displaying "No direct conflicts found."

Of course not. Because the biographies were *not* directly conflicting. They were subtly, disturbingly parallel. They were separate strands that had, through some unknown process, become tangled in a way that mimicked an intentional design.

I leaned back in my chair, the hum of the server racks a low, constant drone. My role was to ensure *Continuity*. And this felt like a rupture, a subtle tear in the tapestry that made up our collective memory. If two distinct families, sharing such specific names and structures, could exist in the archives without a flag, what else might be hiding in plain sight? What other echoes were there, woven into the very stories we used to define ourselves?

I decided to pursue it. Not as an accusation, but as a puzzle. The Ark ran on stories. They were the glue that held us together, the narrative we repeated to ourselves to stave off the existential chill of being suspended between broken moons. If the stories were unreliable, then so, too, might be our foundation. I began to pull other biographies, searching for more Kael-Jaxes, more Elara-Lyras. The shelves of the Library of Continuities, usually a source of reassuring order, now felt like a labyrinth, each spine a potential thread leading to another, more profound, anomaly. The quiet dedication I once felt was now laced with a growing sense of disquiet.

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