

MISSION MANTA RAY



PHILIP KAVVADIAS



2 Palmer Street, Frome, Somerset BA11 1DS

Text © Philip Kavvadias 2025
Illustrations © Euan Cook 2025

First published in Great Britain in 2025
Chicken House
2 Palmer Street
Frome, Somerset BA11 1DS
United Kingdom
www.chickenhousebooks.com

Chicken House/Scholastic Ireland, 89E Lagan Road, Dublin Industrial Estate,
Glasnevin, Dublin D11 HP5F, Republic of Ireland

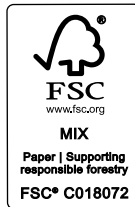
Philip Kavvadias has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs
and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded,
decompiled, reverse engineered, used to train any artificial intelligence
technologies, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and
retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic
or mechanical, now known or hereafter invented, without the
express written permission of the publisher.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations,
places, events and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination
or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons,
living or dead, events or locales is purely coincidental.

Cover and interior design by Steve Wells
Typeset by Dorchester Typesetting Group Ltd
Printed in Great Britain by Clays, Elcograf S.p.A



1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data available.

PB ISBN 978-1-915026-95-8
eISBN 978-1-915947-77-2

2001 – ∞

Tara Sol Augustae

Also by Philip Kavadias

Mission: Microraptor



1

10,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean

‘Five minutes.’

The voice came from the cockpit, through the magic of radio waves, straight into our helmets. (Milo, my good friend and fellow RAPTOR Junior Agent, also known as the Prof, for his knowledge of things, had once explained how radio waves work. I had decided that it was basically magic.)

We stood up. In case you didn’t know, and how could you, the book’s only just started, we were

wearing skydiving jumpsuits, two parachutes (one main, one reserve) and helmets. We unclipped our operation rucksacks from under the bench and clipped them on our fronts, leaving them hanging from the harness. From side pockets we fished out our skydiving goggles and put them on.

‘Kear!’ Artemis, the sixty-five-million-year-old microraptor we had kept safe from evil hands in our previous mission, laughed.

‘Yeah, yeah,’ I said. ‘You can fly, we look like dorks, blah blah blah.’

‘Kear!’

She must have thought we looked ridiculous needing 106 pieces of equipment just to drop in a straight line, whereas she could perform the most amazing air manoeuvres with nothing.

‘I still don’t understand why we need to parachute to *Nausicaa*,’ I said.

Milo explained. ‘It is the quickest way to get there, and given that things are developing quite fast—’

‘It was a red-oracle question.’

‘Rhetorical.’

‘Three minutes,’ said Special Agent Edgar Young, codename Koala, our chaperone on this second mission.

We had arrived at Seoul’s International Airport about five hours earlier and, courtesy of our Korean RAPTOR colleagues, got on to this military transport aeroplane. If you could call it that. A flying machine without comfy seats, without movies, without pretzels and without food trolleys is not an aeroplane. It’s a creation of Satan himself.

Yellow lights flashed inside the fuselage. (That’s the main body of a plane, in case you’re wondering. Milo said it earlier. Not a clue what a fuse has to do with it. Unless it means that if you stay for too long in here you blow a fuse. Dad joke, forget about it.) The hatch at the back opened and came down steadily. A wind of $-7,000$ degrees Celsius blew in. We saw the purple-orange horizon of the morning, and 10,000 feet below, the Pacific Ocean said hi.

‘Where exactly are we?’ I asked.

Milo swallowed hard.

‘Are you all right, Prof?’ I asked, putting my arm around his shoulders, knowing that traces of his acrophobia were still around, although he had fought it in our previous mission.

He took a few deep breaths and said in a slightly trembling voice: ‘11.37 degrees north, 142.59 degrees east. Right where the *Nausicaa* is waiting for us.’

‘Confirmed,’ said Edgar, checking a tablet on his forearm. ‘Everyone ready?’

I looked at Milo. Taking one last deep breath, he nodded.

I glanced at Artemis. She was perching at the end of the hatch door, enjoying the wind on her face and her feathers, her raptor senses in full mode.

‘Ready,’ I told Edgar.

‘Grey-faced Buzzard and Himalayan Ruby-throat,’ he said on his mic, ‘thanks for the ride.’

‘You’re welcome, Koala,’ the pilots replied.

Cool names. Everyone has cool names. Whereas mine is...

‘Sparrow! Go!’