

HE GOT STRONGER. SHE GOT BETTER.



THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

ABBREVIATED EDITION

GIVEN TIME

ERIC GOLDSTEIN

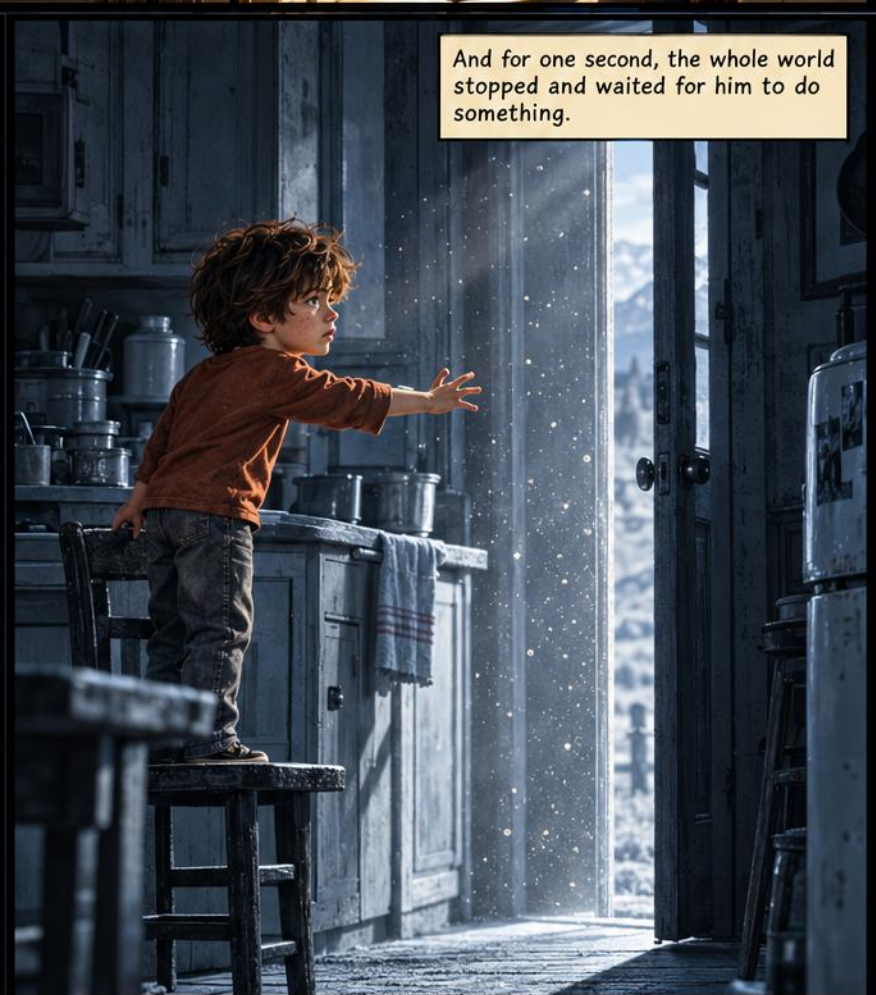
He was around six. Small enough that the kitchen counter was still a shelf he couldn't see over without a chair.



Nobody in that house kept track of things like months. He only remembered the suitcases.



And for one second, the whole world stopped and waited for him to do something.



He didn't know what to do with it. He didn't know yet that it would come back, or what he would become when it did.



Rock Springs, Wyoming. Nine years later.
A town you could grow up in without
anyone quite learning your name.



Dylan Mercer, fifteen. Tall for
his age and thin with it, already
learning to stoop.



Where the hell
you been?

School, Dad.
It's four o'clock.



Everything stopped. The radio.
The dust. His father's hand, an
inch from his face.



His father decided he was drunker
than he thought. Dylan let him.

...the hell?



He needed a word for it. 'Freeze' was the one that came, because that's what it looked like from outside.



The rules came slowly. Ten seconds cost nothing. Moving things cost everything. Carrying a dictionary eight feet meant an hour of headache.



It worked like a muscle. You trained it, and it got stronger, and it hurt.



He held it well past the ninety seconds he'd always stopped at, until his head began to go.

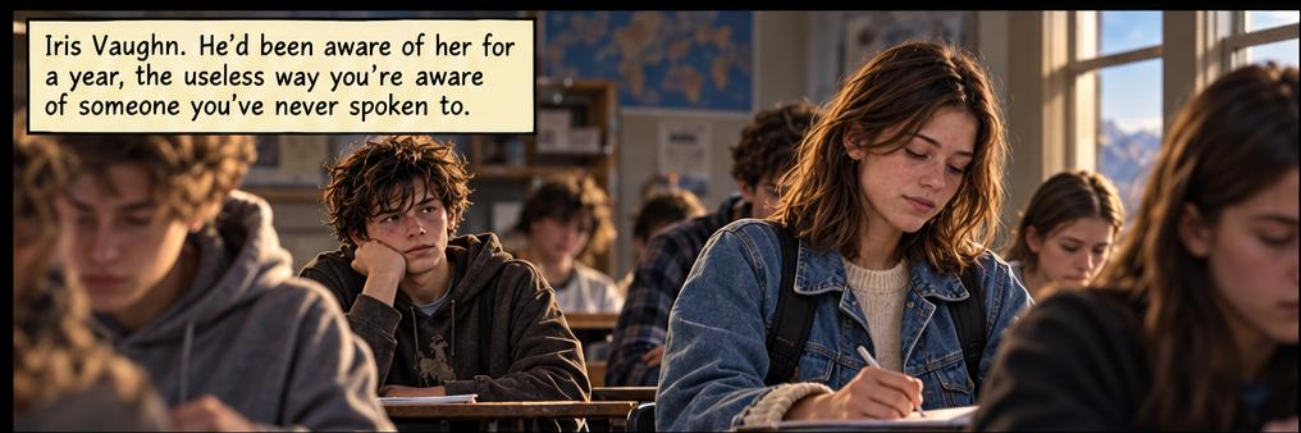


Everyone on board landed in Denver and never knew a boy on a bicycle had held them over Sweetwater County.



There was nobody to tell. There never would be.

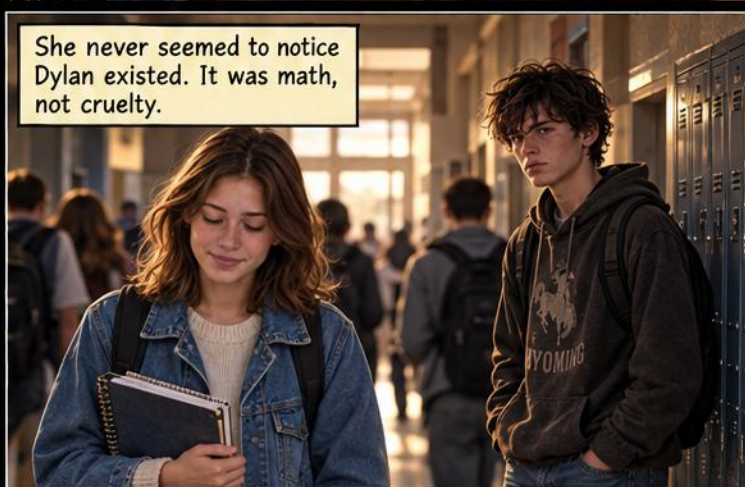
Iris Vaughn. He'd been aware of her for a year, the useless way you're aware of someone you've never spoken to.



She wasn't the kind of beautiful that stopped hallways. She was warm. She thanked the janitor and meant it.



She never seemed to notice Dylan existed. It was math, not cruelty.



Her mother found out from somebody else's mother.



She wanted out of Rock Springs as badly as he did. Neither of them knew yet they had that in common.



She'd mentioned the band once.
He found the album in a bin
in Rock Springs.



You found it?

It was just there.



He pretended it was nothing.
She could tell it wasn't.



Lull Weather. One earbud each.



The job at the plant ended in March. His father didn't look for another. Poker was the only thing left standing.



Dylan started covering things without being asked. The electric bill. Then groceries. Then everything.



Marcus Kowalski. Star receiver. A name said a certain way in the hallways: half respect, half warning.



Watch where you're going, Mercer.



He didn't use the power on Marcus. Not then. But some part of him started running numbers.





Watch where
you're going,
Mercer.

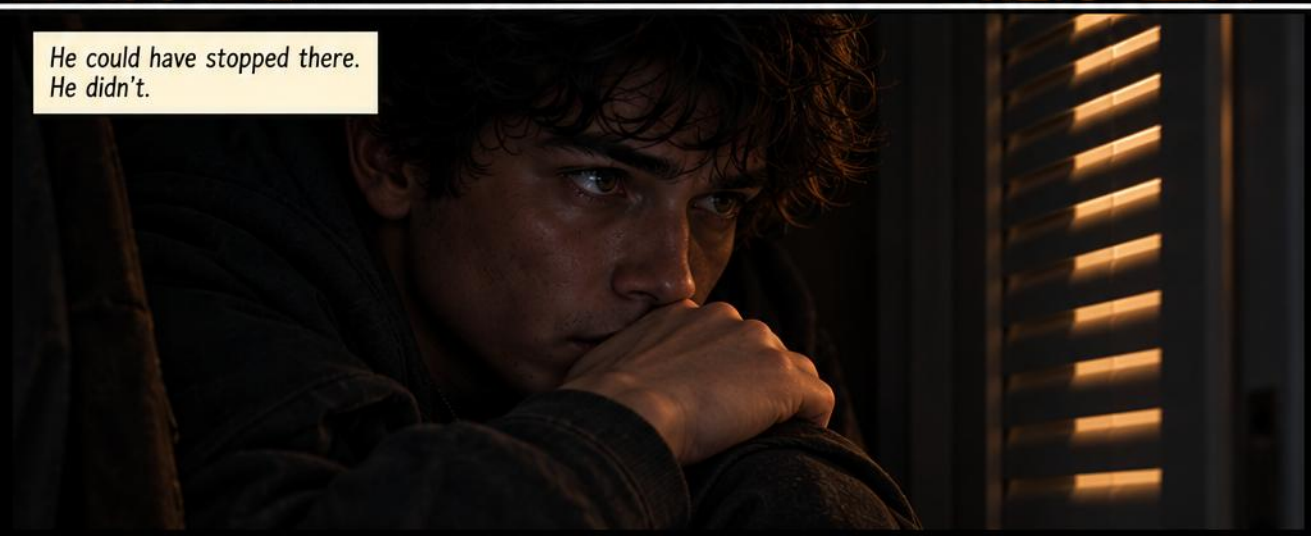
He knew that kind of anger.
He'd grown up with it.



From a closet, he heard
Marcus's father. He knew
that voice too.



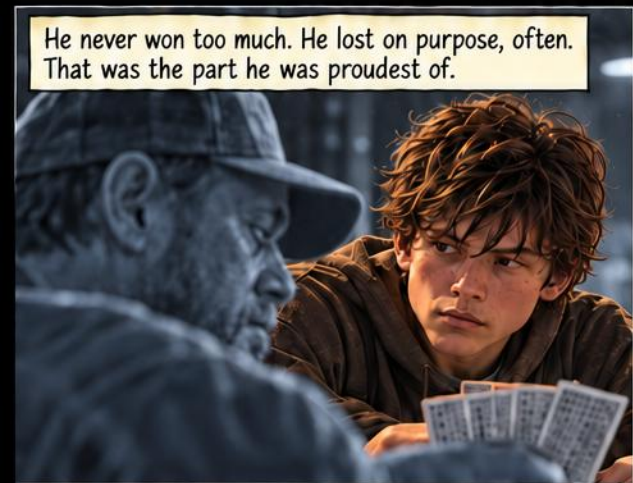
He could have stopped there.
He didn't.



That summer he found the garage game.
Men who'd lose a paycheck to a sixteen-year-old
and call him lucky.



He never won too much. He lost on purpose, often.
That was the part he was proudest of.



Dylan heard it sideways, the way everything
important arrived at that garage.



Kowalski kid again.
Second week he drops a ball
he's caught a hundred times.

Marcus was dropping passes.
Somebody was paying him to.



Dylan made sure the right people found out.
Marcus was expelled months before the end of his
senior year. The recruiting letters stopped inside a week.



He waited to feel
something. It never came.



The months after that were good.
He and Iris were together now, openly.



You're weirdly good
with money for someone
who works at a drugstore.

I invest.



I'm late. I took
four tests.

There's a clinic two
towns over. It's fifteen
hundred dollars. I can't
tell my parents.

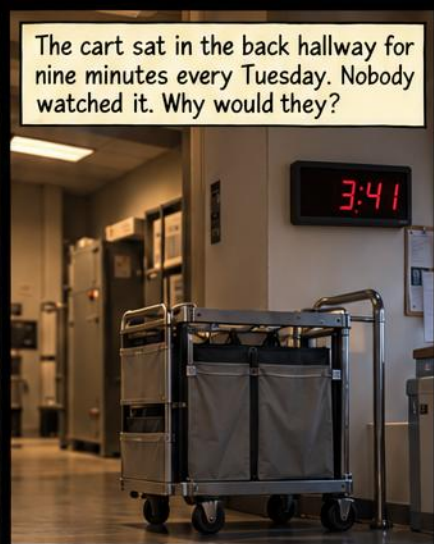
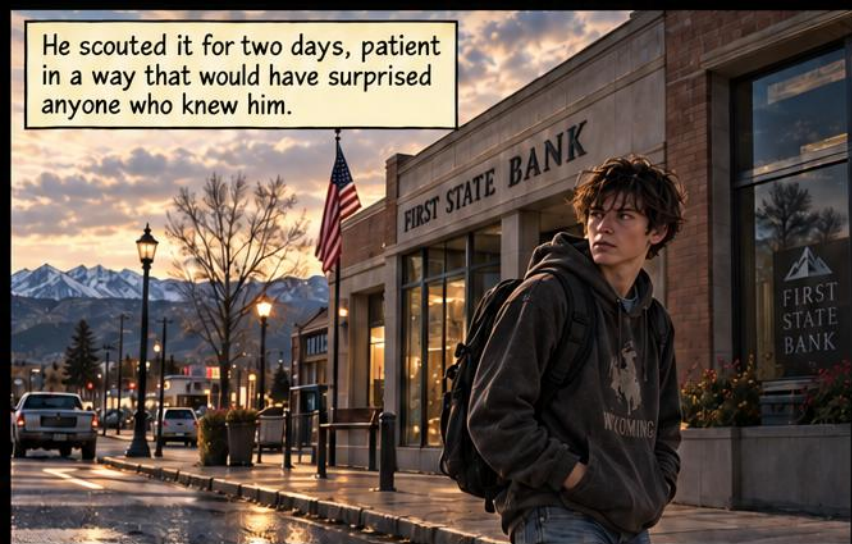


He had three hundred and eleven dollars.
He had a power nobody else on earth had.
He did the math.



He scouted it for two days, patient in a way that would have surprised anyone who knew him.

The cart sat in the back hallway for nine minutes every Tuesday. Nobody watched it. Why would they?



Thirty-two thousand dollars. He only needed fifteen hundred.

That was the arithmetic, and it was not wrong.



They blamed the teller. Her name ended up in the paper. He didn't know what he'd have done if he'd known.

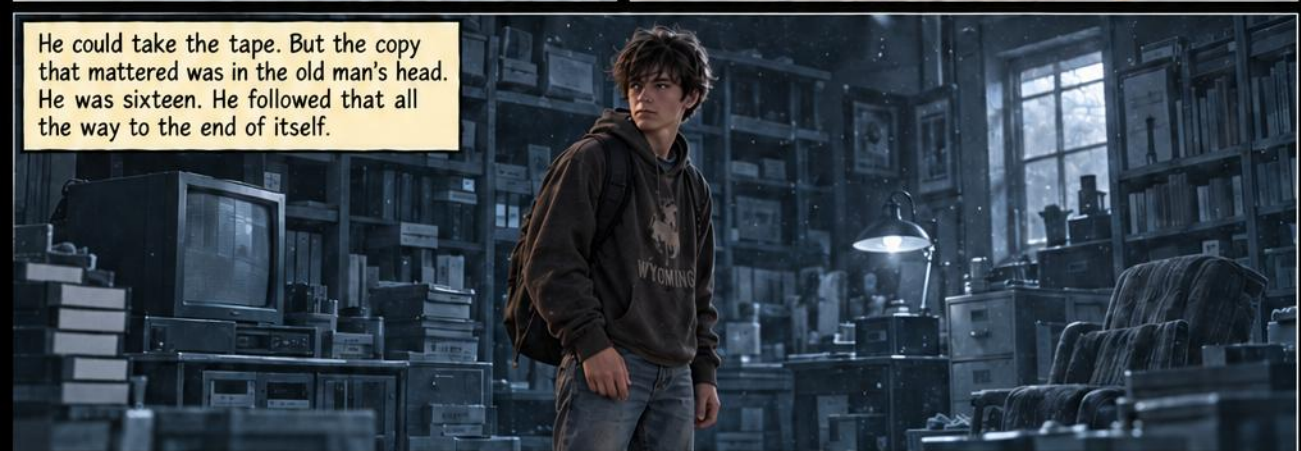
... a brazen robbery... thirty-two thousand dollars... still no suspects.



Walter Bell had kept security tapes for nineteen years. He watched them like other men watched ball games.



He could take the tape. But the copy that mattered was in the old man's head. He was sixteen. He followed that all the way to the end of itself.



He wasn't there, and then he was. He came out of nothing. I'm telling you.

Okay, Walter.



Walter came home early and went in after his tapes. He lived. Dylan found out in a grocery store, and stood very still in the cereal aisle.



Three weeks later.
A house party in the hills.



Iris and Priya on the third-floor balcony.
Iris had a new camera. She took it
everywhere.



He was eleven feet away
when it happened.



TO BE CONTINUED...

The rest of the story is in the novel.



GIVEN TIME

a novel by Eric Goldstein

He can stop the world. Can she stop him?

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