

SAMAEL'S TEARS**By JY Yang****PAGE 1****PANEL**

It opens with a small black panel, empty except for text, narration by our protagonist Mira Kovac (15).

MIRA (Narration)

They say that all matter is the same, when you get down to it.

Plants, animals, rocks in the road: there's not much difference past the molecular level. Everything's made of the same bits and bobs.

PANEL

Long, ground up perspective of a residential street flanked by crowded blocks on either side. Here we get our first glimpse of Mira. She's running, frantically, with enemy vultures right behind her, fangs bared. These are genetically modified and programmed creatures with long necks and leathery wings, the neighboring state's feared & reviled killing machines.

MIRA (Narration)

The way they explained the whole manipulating-matter thing was this: if you have a piece of paper, you can draw on it. You can draw whatever you want, and edit and erase over and over.

That's because you're in three dimensions and the drawings are in two.

The first couple of pages are almost silent, with her narration running over the images in boxes.

PANEL

Overhead shot of Mira, from the birds' perspective.

MIRA (Narration)

If you follow that, then it makes perfect sense that if you went into a higher dimension, you could play around with stuff that's in three dimensions. Us, in other words.

She's running frantically down the street, obvious in her military fatigues, dodging shocked pedestrians.

PANEL

Medium close-up shot. Mira pushes a young schoolgirl who's in her way. The girl looks shocked.

MIRA
Get out of the way!

PANEL
Close up of Mira, where we can clearly see the squarish device hanging off her neck with her dogtags: Samael's Tears.

MIRA (Narration)
Just like drawings are made of lines and curves put together, matter's made of the same sort of things put together. Subatomic particles.

PANEL
Mira closes her eyes and grasps the device.

MIRA (Narration)
Rearrange them the right way and you can make anything.

PAGE 2

PANEL
An explosion of energy fills the panel. The street is engulfed in a circular ball of white light.

MIRA (Narration)
Masonry out of potted plants.

MIRA (Narration)
Minerals out of yesterday's lunch.

PANEL
In the heat of the explosion, the schoolgirl's silhouette dissolves as though sucked into a drainhole.

MIRA (Narration)
Machines out of flesh and bone.

PANEL
Out of the destruction shoots the sleek angular shape of a fighter jet, guns blazing at the enemy vultures. This is Samael's Blade, the fighter plane created by the device.

PANEL
Closeup on the cockpit: in the pilot's seat is Mira, face screwed up in concentration.

MIRA (Narration)
Once you've figured out how to work it, matter

conversion's just a snap of the fingers. Push a button and you can make up whatever you want.

PANEL

A wide panel across the bottom of the page. The fighter jet pulls away from the street, the city, leaving behind a huge circular blackened crater where street and buildings once were.

MIRA

Or at least, that's what they say.

PAGE 3

PANEL

A grainy, televised image of a reporter as she stands in front of the court building, speaking to the camera. Mira's narration continues.

REPORTER

...we are outside the building where the military trial of Mira Kovac is coming to an end. Implicated in the deaths of more than a hundred civilians, this case is a watershed in...

MIRA (Narration)

The truth is, you can't make matter out of nothing. Not really. To make a fighter jet where there wasn't one you need a fighter-jet-sized chunk of something.

And when that something is a city block in a populated area...

PANEL

The inside of a small, bare-bones courtroom: a few rows of chairs, barely filled, in an unadorned room. A few security guards stand at their posts, bored; at the far end of the room waits General Schmidt (47), at attention.

Focus on Mira in the accused dock, facing the judge (out of frame) her head bowed, hands clasped.

MIRA (Narration)

Well, "oops" doesn't really cut it, does it.

The judge is reading out the verdict from his position out of frame.

JUDGE (Offscreen)

Mira Kovac, Private First Class, for the charge of causing civilian death by negligence and disobeying of directions, this court finds the accused...

MIRA (Narration)

It's okay, I've kind of accepted my fate anyway.

PANEL

Shot on the judge, his face heavy and emotionless.

JUDGE

...not guilty.

MIRA (Narration)

What?

PANEL

Wider shot of the courtroom as Mira reacts to the verdict in wordless shock. The judge is closing his book and standing up, as if he can't wait for the trial to be over.

JUDGE

I declare this case closed.

MIRA (Narration)

That can't be right!

PANEL

Mira runs after the judge as he steps off his rostrum and heads towards the exit with the few other bored observers. He looks annoyed at being delayed.

MIRA

Wait, wait.

Don't I get an appeal?

JUDGE

What for, child? You were exonerated. Did you not hear?

PANEL

Focus on Mira. Her arms are crossed, both defensive and upset.

MIRA

People *died*.

JUDGE

You stated, in your testimony, that circumstances left you no choice but to act.

MIRA

Yes, but...

PANEL

The judge leans in closer and whispers.

JUDGE

Let me give you a helping hand, child. The trial is over. The proceedings are closed. It will be better for you to just let it go.

On the right side of the panel, General Schmidt reaches for Mira. **She looks at him, as if in appeal.**

MIRA

General Schmidt...

SCHMIDT

He's right, Mira. Just let it go. Come on.

PAGE 4

PANEL

It's later in the day. A party is in full swing in the mess hall. Nothing fancy: soldiers gather around the long pre-molded aluminum tables with drinks and talk, while music plays in the background. On the far left of the table in the foreground, Branko "Bunker" Kovic (24) and Trace Jakov (21) are downing cheap beers and trying to cheer Mira up.

BUNKER

If you keep pulling that frown, folks might start thinking you lost the case.

TRACE

Yeah. Lighten up! Down one. Or twenty.

Ratko Vukovic (17) sits between the two and Mira. He's pushing a glass over to her, trying to encourage her to drink up. She's not having any of it.

RATKO

This is a celebration, not a funeral. Have a drink, it's on me.

MIRA

Whatever, Ratko. You've passed the legal 16 barrier, I haven't.

RATKO

So what? Who cares?

PANEL

Push in on Mira as she gets to her feet with an apologetic expression on her face.

MIRA

Actually guys, my batteries are kind of running flat.
I'm heading back to bunk.

TRACE
Wet blanket!

PANEL
Mira's back as she heads towards the exit. Branko looks her way her with a frown, while Bunker tries to reel Trace back in.

BUNKER
Be gentle with her, she's just a kid...

PANEL
Schmidt, sitting by himself at a table, watches Mira's shadow exit the doorway. He looks concerned.

PANEL
But Mira doesn't go back to her bunk. Instead she heads for the hangar, where there are a couple of modified gliders waiting: single-man, highly maneuverable recon units.

MIRA (Narration)
To be honest I just wanted to get out of there.

I love those guys, but I need time to think.

PAGE 5

PANEL
Against the backdrop of the fading evening sky, Mira takes one of the gliders out to stretch its wings. She soars over the burned remains of the industrial park she used to work at.

MIRA (Narration)
This is my favorite place in the world.

When I was little I used to watch planes go by
overhead.

PANEL
FLASHBACK: Bird's eye view of Mira as a young child, perched on a couple of discarded containers in the industrial park, waving excitedly at military jets as they fly-by.

MIRA (Narration)
I wanted so badly to be like them, free and high in the
wide blue sky.

PANEL

Back to the present. Mira pulls her glider in a sharp turn and it soars over a tightly-knit forest canopy.

MIRA (Narration)

Now I keep going back to that schoolgirl who died. I pushed her out of danger, yet... I know there are lots more who are gone, but hers is the only face I remember.

Funny how things turn out...

PANEL

A second glider pulls up beside her, it's mounted engines at full blast. It's Ratko, and he doesn't have any protection on his head, except for a cocky grin perhaps.

RATKO

"Heading back to bunk"? Are you intending to sleep in there?

MIRA

Oh shush. Can't a girl have some alone time?

RATKO

Not when a party's going on. That's just being anti-social.

PANEL

As Mira sighs in real exasperation at Ratko, he pulls his glider in front of hers to block her way.

MIRA

Ratko, I really need some time to think.

RATKO

There's nothing to think about and I'm annoying you about it until you agree with me.

PANEL

Mira wheels her glider around to avoid his, her jaw set.

MIRA

You're a jerk.

The two gliders look like they're locked in for a collision course.

PAGE 6

PANEL

Two split-screen panels running down most of the length of the page: in one, Mira in her cockpit, upset; in the other, Ratko in his cockpit, confident and arrogant. Their conversation takes place in bubbles between them.

RATKO

I know you're upset. But there's a lesson about war.

MIRA

What are you doing?

RATKO

People are always going to die. It's a payoff to keep the people you care about safe.

MIRA

I can't believe you're saying that.

PANEL

Ratko grits his teeth and slants his plane across the panel.

RATKO

Really? I'd destroy cities to save my friends. Any number of them. I wouldn't regret a thing.

PAGE 7

PANEL

On the top, taking up about half the page width. A quick shot of their plane wings tangled with one another. The dialogue bubbles here spill over to the neighboring panels.

RATKO (Offscreen)

It's the natural order of things.
This device is a gift, and I'll be an idiot not to use it.

MIRA (Offscreen)

Ratko, that is flat-out *scary*.

PANEL

The second half of the page width. A dynamic shot of the gliders—doesn't have to be the whole thing, can just be parts of the bodies and wings—as they crash to the ground in a field.

PANEL

Ratko and Mira standing in the foreground, waiting for rescue. Both of them are a little dusted-up but otherwise okay. Both look defiant—it's a fight scene. In the background their flaming glider wrecks make a dramatic backdrop.

RATKO

You're still a kid. You'll understand what I mean

someday.

MIRA

I think I understand enough.

PAGE 8

It's nighttime in the bunkers; no need to show this since the bunkers are indoors, underground—no windows. Mira is on her bed, thinking about Ratko. She's very unsettled by what just happened.

MIRA (Narration)

I don't know what's happened to him, but I don't like it.

Samael's Tears has changed him.

I don't want to become like him.

PANEL

A while later: Mira is walking down a corridor in the base, her back to us. There are a few servicemen in the corridor, but they are indistinct.

MIRA (Narration)

It's selfish, but I have to do this.

PANEL

Schmidt's office. Closeup, we're focused on his desk, where there's a white piece of paper on his desk. We can see part of Mira's back in the frame as she stands at attention. Schmidt looks surprised.

SCHMIDT

You're resigning?

PANEL

Reverse angle; now we're focused on Mira's face. She looks downwards, her face completely serious.

MIRA

I've thought about it very carefully.

I don't feel I'm suitable for this program.

Killing... that's not in my nature. I think it's best for everyone if I left the force.

I don't want to hold people back.

PANEL

A long panel stretching across the bottom of the page. A wide shot of Schmidt's office, with both Schmidt and Mira in profile. Schmidt is standing now.

SCHMIDT

Well, I'm afraid I can't humor you.

MIRA

Humor...? I'm being serious.

SCHMIDT

Come with me. There's something you need to see.

MIRA (Narration)

And I spent all night thinking about the most mature way to say that.

PAGE 9

A wide shot of a hangar; in the middle stands a stealth plane occupying a large part of it. Mira and Schmidt are approaching the plane.

MIRA

Where are we going?

SCHMIDT

You'll see.

PAGE 10

PANEL

Shot of the stealth plane as it breaks through the cloud layer, **into a sky sprinkled liberally with stars.**

PANEL

The cockpit of the stealth plane. Schmidt is in strapped into the pilot's seat; Mira is beside him. She's not looking at him, she's looking out of the window.

SCHMIDT

You mustn't think that I'm ignoring your point of view. I know how you feel.

MIRA

Are you taking me somewhere classified? Why do we need this stealth plane?

PAGE 11

PANEL

Shot of the stealth plane as it goes up, to where the atmosphere thins, **and the clouds fade into nothingness.**

SCHMIDT (Offscreen)

We're going into enemy territory, just inside the border.

I won't lie to you, Mira. This is going to be dangerous.
But you need to understand some things.

PANEL

Back in the cockpit. Mira is now looking at Schmidt. She's annoyed. Schmidt looks a little pained.

MIRA

You can't just tell me?

SCHMIDT

Think about the past.
Who you used to be.

PANEL

Shot of the stealth plane from above as it starts to descend over land. There's the vague shape of a coastline in view, and bordering that, the black outline of a small coastal town.

MIRA (Narration)

I wish he would just answer the question. Where is he going with this?

PAGE 12

PANEL

Wide shot. The stealth plane has landed in the devastated, ruined town. Buildings-2 or 3 stories high, this is not a big city, but a town center—are black and empty, their windows blown out. Night-shadows swallow the surroundings. The ground is littered with debris. There are a couple of dead bodies in sight, facedown and mutilated. In the middle of it all Mira stands stunned, with Schmidt behind her, as they exit from the plane.

MIRA

What is this? Bioweapon? Genocide? The Apocalypse?

SCHMIDT

Bird of prey attack.
This is a rebel town, they wanted to secede and join us. Their government couldn't allow something like that to happen, so they unleashed their weapons.
This is the fate you saved the town you destroyed from.

PAGE 13

PANEL

Shot of Mira's feet; the decapitated stone head of a cherubim lies there. Her hands are reaching down into the frame to pick it up. The dust at Mira's feet dances as a wind blows through.

MIRA

Is this supposed to make me feel better about what I did?

PANEL

Schmidt stands looking out at the carnage.

SCHMIDT

I wanted to show you one of the true faces of war.
I don't think it would make anybody feel better.

PANEL

Mira has found the statue that the stone head belongs to: it's an angel that sits mounted on the edge of a water feature, now dry and with cracked masonry from the ferocity of the bird of prey attack. She's holding the head above the statue quizzically, trying to figure out which way to put it back on. Schmidt's voice punctuates the frame.

SCHMIDT (O/S)

You are too young to remember the last Crisis War.
That is enviable, but at the same time it is also pitiable.

PANEL

Closeup of the statue's head as Mira places it back on the cracked body.

SCHMIDT (OFFSCREEN)

People went crazy. There were murders in the streets, burnings and lynchings. Neighbors slaughtered each other, siblings betrayed one another. Where I was from, the government sent the secret police everywhere. We didn't know who to trust.

PAGE 14

PANEL

Closeup on Schmidt. His eyes are lowered, he looks pensive. This panel doesn't have to be very large, maybe just a cutaway of the following panel.

SCHMIDT

It was an evil time.

PANEL

Mira stares at Schmidt (out of frame). She's let go of the statue's head to give her full attention to Schmidt, and the statue's head is in the midst of falling off the body again.

MIRA

Evil...

PANEL

Mira and Schmidt form the frame of this panel. Schmidt has his back to the viewer, Mira faces them. She's not looking at them, though; she's looking downwards.

MIRA

And here I thought I had a hard life.

SCHMIDT

Do you believe in destiny?

PANEL

A full shot of Mira as she bends down to pick up the fallen statue head.

MIRA

"Destiny" is a pretty big word.
It's a bit too fancy for my tastes, I think.

SCHMIDT (OFFSCREEN)

Well, I do.

PANEL

Mira, straightening up with the head in her hands, gives him an incredulous look.

PANEL

A dramatic shot of Schmidt, from a lower perspective. Framed above him is the **night** sky and the dark curls of lingering smoke.

SCHMIDT

I believe people have an innate capacity for good or evil.
Some people are just meant to do good.
Some people are meant to do evil.
And some... should be kept away from devastating power.

PAGE 15

PANEL

A series of 4 slender panels, side-by-side on the page, with Mira and Schmidt alternating. In the first one, Mira is looking up at Schmidt, her eyes wide.

MIRA

Are you saying that...

PANEL

Schmidt looks regretful, sad.

SCHMIDT

You children were never meant to be part of the program. It was an accident. There was an error, and

the enlisted men we were preparing to be pilots were all killed.

PANEL

Mira looks away from the viewer, contemplating something in her memory.

MIRA

The explosion at the base...

PANEL

Schmidt looks helpless, shrugging.

SCHMIDT

The fallout changed your DNA, allowed you to link with the Samael's Tears device.

We had no choice. The state wouldn't let us run the experiment again. We had to conscript you as pilots...

PANEL

Wide shot taking up 3/4ths of the bottom of the page. Schmidt has crossed the distance to Mira's side and is gently taking the statue's head from her.

SCHMIDT

You were not meant to be soldiers.

MIRA

Exactly. That's why I want to leave. We're on the same page!

PANEL

Shot on Schmidt, his brows creased.

SCHMIDT

It's not you I'm worried about.

PAGE 16

PANEL

Another set of splitscreen panels, like on page 6. Mira on the left, Schmidt on the right. Mira's demeanor is shocked and alarmed; Schmidt's is deadly serious. Their speech bubbles interlock in between the two panels.

MIRA

What's that mean?

SCHMIDT

You've got a good heart, Mira. I believe that. But I'm not so sure about the others. Like Ratko.

MIRA

Ratko?

He... he said something to me last night. Something about destroying cities.

SCHMIDT

You see. That boy scares me sometimes.

The truth is, the Samael's Tears device is more powerful than you know. More powerful than you, or, Ratko, or anybody knows. Not even the state knows... I shudder to think what would happen in they did.

MIRA

More powerful than it is now? You're kidding.

SCHMIDT

I put limitations on the Samael's Tears devices. I restricted what it could do to only one very small, small thing. If anyone ever figures out how to unlock it...

Matter conversion is not constrained by volume, only by will.

MIRA

Are you saying that we could destroy the entire planet and remake it into something else... if we wanted to?

PANEL

Across the bottom of the page. Closeup on Schmidt as he lowers his eyes.

PAGE 17

PANEL

Mira in the foreground, Schmidt in the back.

SCHMIDT

In all honesty, Mira... I do not know. But it's possible.

MIRA

You gave me a weapon that can end the world.

SCHMIDT

And I fear that somebody might do it.

PANEL

A gunscope viewpoint from a distance, focused on Mira and Schmidt.

PANEL

Shot again as in the first panel. Gunfire peppers the ground from an unknown location, as Mira and Schmidt jump behind the water feature to avoid the gunshots.

MIRA
Crap!

SCHMIDT
We've overstayed our welcome.

PAGE 18

PANEL

Slightly overhead shot of Mira and Schmidt as they run frantically towards a blown-out house for cover. Mira is in front, Schmidt slightly behind.

PANEL

Shot from the front as Schmidt gets hit in the side. He goes down, clutching at his abdomen.

SCHMIDT
They've blocked the way out—unf!

PANEL

Mira goes back to help Schmidt, trying to haul him to his feet. Side profile, full body shot, as she helps him to his feet. Schmidt resists her help.

MIRA
General!

SCHMIDT
It's alright... leave me.

PAGE 19

PANEL

Shot: they duck for cover behind the semi-safety of a broken wall. Schmidt is badly hurt, bleeding.

PANEL

Close-up of Mira's face as she peeks over the edge of the wall, trying to gauge the strength of the unseen enemy.

MIRA
They've blocked the way to our plane!

PANEL

Schmidt pulls Mira down towards him, urgently.

SCHMIDT
Use the device... get out of here.

PANEL

From Schmidt's perspective of Mira, she leans over him, a towering figure of shock and fright.

MIRA

No! You'll die!

PAGE 20

PANEL

Schmidt shakes his head, resigned to his fate already. He looks at Mira kindly.

SCHMIDT

I think that's a foregone conclusion by now. It's probably better this way.

PANEL

Mira grabs one of Schmidt's shoulders, anguished.

MIRA

You're asking me to kill you. I can't do that!

PANEL

Shot of enemy boots running on the ground, headed towards them.

PANEL

Schmidt takes Mira's hand. The focus in this panel is on Schmidt, but we must be able to see Mira as well. Preferably from a side profile. The sound of approaching boots continue.

SCHMIDT

We're surrounded, Mira, and I need you to get out.
It's better to have my secrets die with me.
But if anyone ever figures out the truth about the device... if they abuse it ... I need you to stop them.
You're the only safeguard against the monster I may have created.

PAGE 21

PANEL

This panel is going to take up the most of the page. It's split into a two segments: Mira and Ratko, Mira's memory of the frightening look Ratko had when they had their last argument, the burning wrecks of the gliders behind them. Mira's words are overlaid over the panel.

MIRA (Narration)

Monster? People aren't monsters.
I don't believe anyone's born good or bad. It's not my style.

But I understand what General Schmidt means. And I can't abandon Ratko. The General is right. I have to protect him. Both of them. They're all that I have.

PANEL

Mira nods to Schmidt, her mind made up, but it's clear this decision hurts her.

MIRA

Okay. I'll do it.

PAGE 22

PANEL

Schmidt retrieves a slender datastick—the modern equivalent of a thumb drive—and hands it to Mira: clearly he's already prepared for this possibility.

SCHMIDT

Take this back to the Lieutenant-General. He'll know what to do.

PANEL

Mira takes the datastick tearfully.

MIRA

I'm so sorry. This is all my fault.

PANEL

Schmidt smiles fondly, somewhat sadly, up at Mira. He feels it's his fault that she's where is is now.

SCHMIDT

No, it isn't. Take care, Mira. You'll do good.

PANEL

Mira closes her eyes and closes her hand around the device.

PANEL

A skinny panel going across the bottom of the page, bright white, as the device activates.

PAGE 23

PANEL

Samael's Blade bursts upwards, over the blackened crater that remains of the ruined town. **As the sun rises**, Mira pilots in the cockpit, grimly and her face streaked with tears.

MIRA (Narration)

I don't believe in destiny. I don't believe things

always happen for a reason.
But I do believe in keeping promises. And I promised
to keep fighting.

For General Schmidt's sake, for Ratko's sake...
I'll do good.

Her jaw is set as she streaks forward, towards the future, towards the sky.

END