

Wild Zone Guardians

False Hunger



She came toward us slowly,
as if every step had to fight
the body carrying it.



The corruption burned
around her mouth,
but her eyes still
knew fear.



Residue was not food.
The hunger only told
her it was.



That made her harder
to fight, not easier.



TARGET ANALYSIS: UNKNOWN HUMAN



CORRUPTION INTRUSION: 87%
NEURAL INSTABILITY: HIGH
MUSCLE OVERLOAD: 77%
PAIN SIGNALS: ELEVATED
HUNGER COMMAND: ACTIVE

RESPONSE PROBABILITY:
UNPREDICTABLE

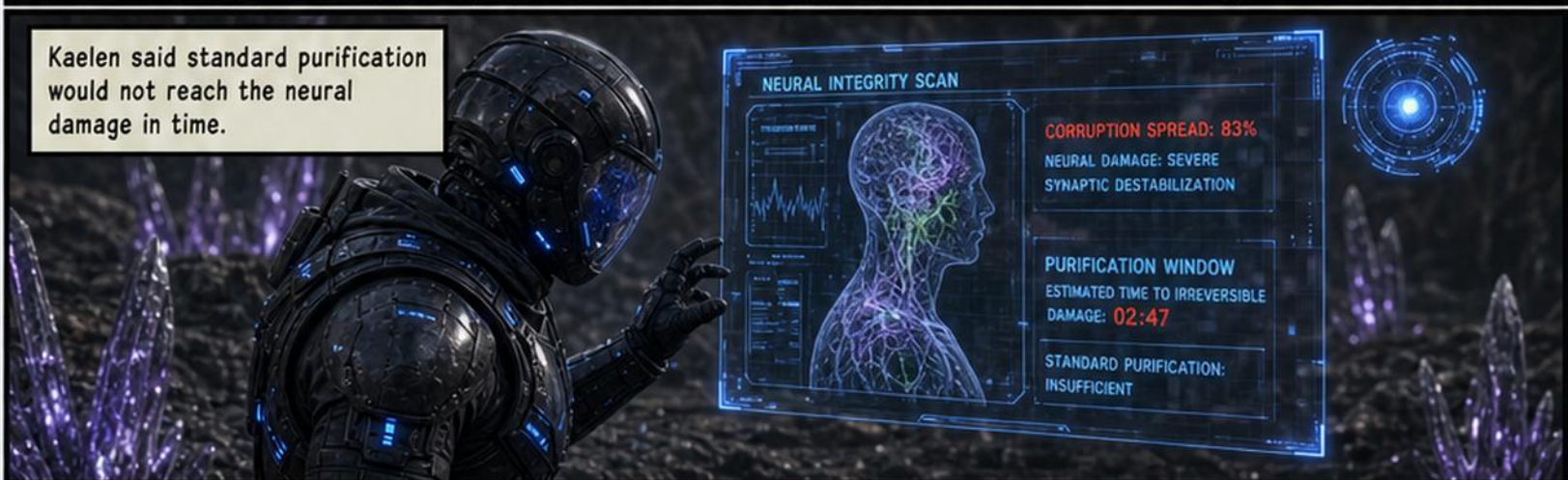
We backed away because
killing her was the wrong answer.



We backed away because
letting her touch us might be the
last mistake we ever made.



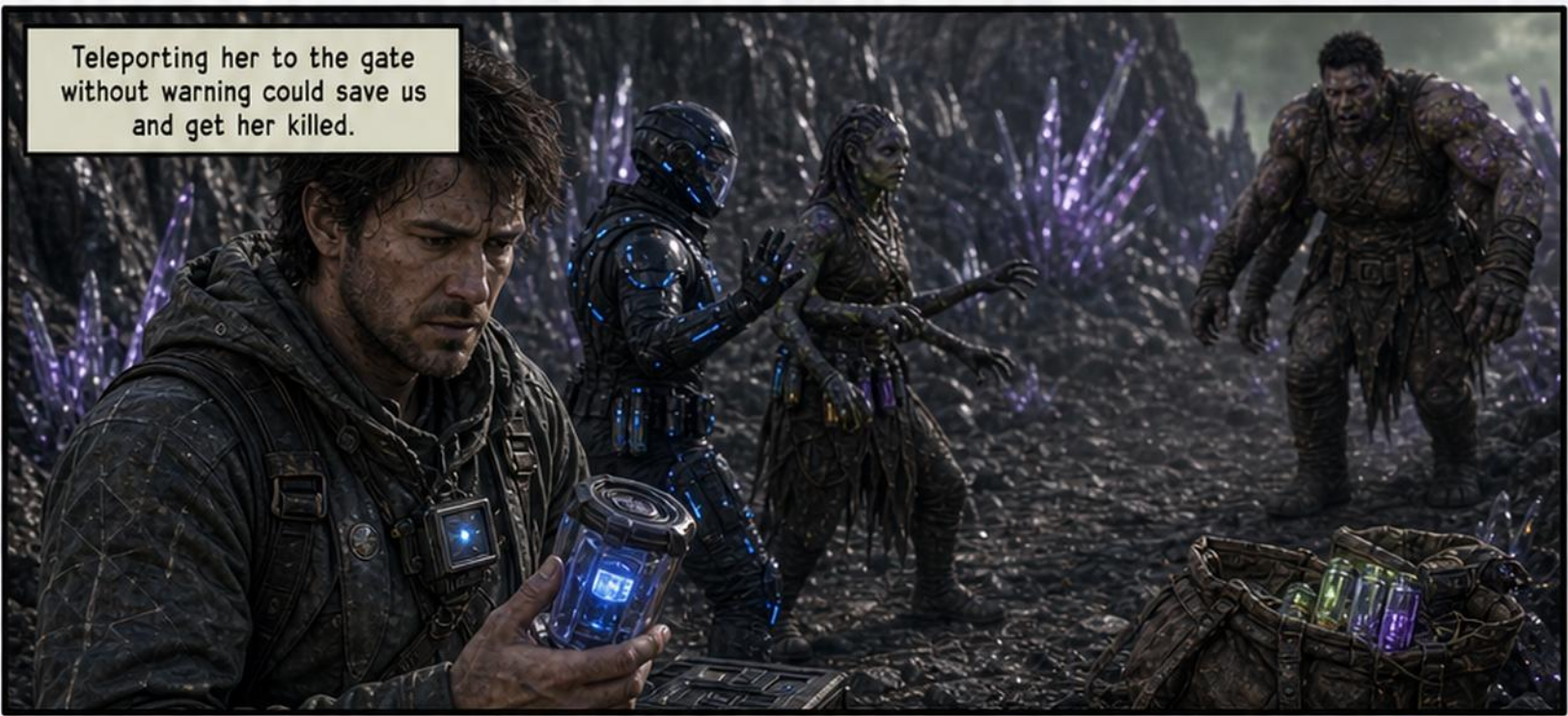
Kaelen said standard purification
would not reach the neural
damage in time.



Vessara said close contact might get
one of us broken before it got her saved.



Teleporting her to the gate without warning could save us and get her killed.



Quasar reached for the subnet, but the local corruption turned signal into static.



The bandit heard none of our calculations. She only heard the hunger.



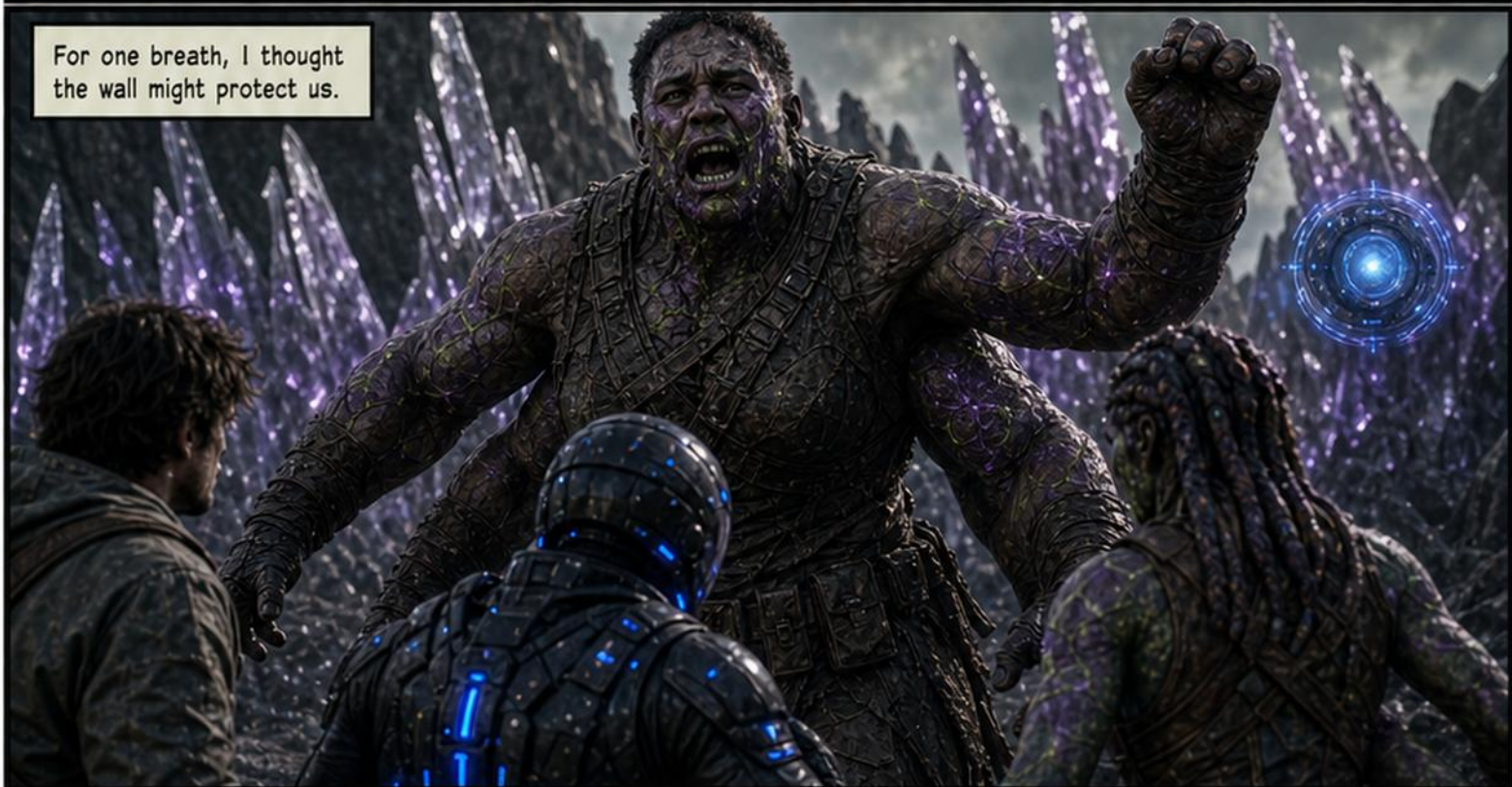
Every second we spent choosing mercy gave her another step.



The path ended in a wall of natural crystal.



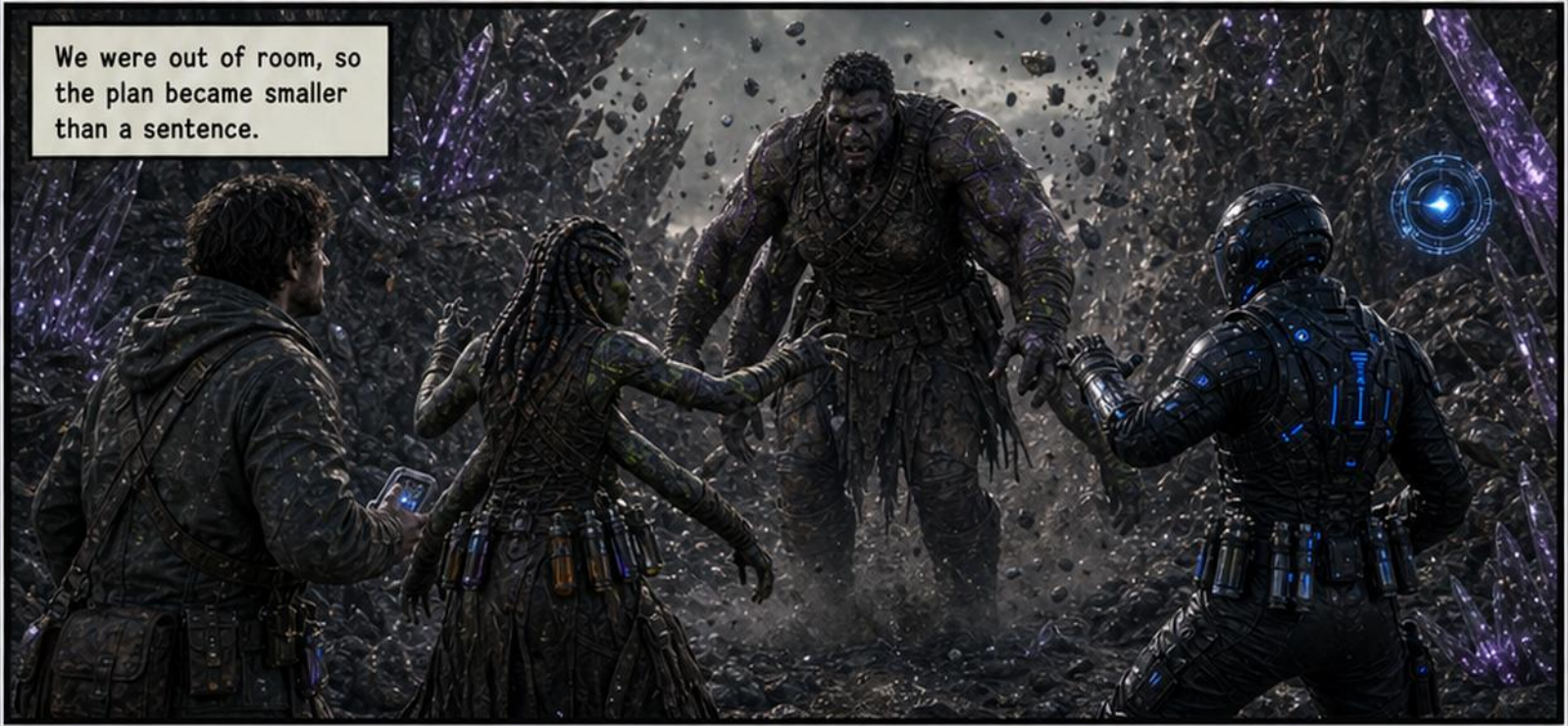
For one breath, I thought the wall might protect us.



Then she missed us by inches and punched the wall into knives of light.



We were out of room, so the plan became smaller than a sentence.



Vessara threw the catalysts where I could reach them without letting her get close.



I teleported the vials into the space above the bandit.



Purifying light rained down, and the corruption screamed through her muscles.



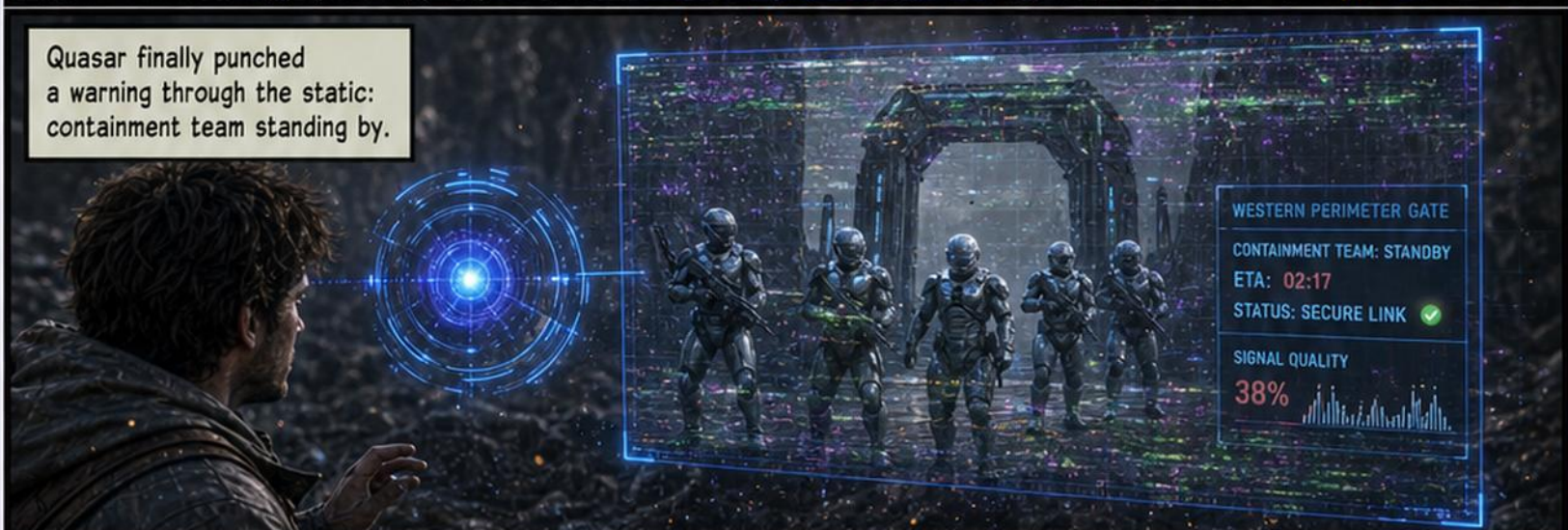
The catalysts gave Kaelen an opening, not a solution.



Blue containment lines wrapped the bandit's corrupted field and shook like wire under too much weight.



Quasar finally punched a warning through the static: containment team standing by.



Kaelen gave me thirty seconds before the suit overloaded.



First, I moved the team
out of the corner.



Her strike destroyed the place
where we had been standing.



Then I sent her to the gate, where
the guards were ready to contain
instead of execute.



We saved her life.
Kaelen's suit paid the price.

