

ACT IV — “Completion”

The room didn't wait for consensus.

It never had.

That had been the mistake from the beginning—believing there was a point where agreement mattered.

There wasn't.

There was only sequence.

And the sequence had been denied its end for too long.

The first real shift came without warning.

Not the subtle misalignments. Not the almost-collapse echoes.

This was different.

The floor dropped.

Not physically—no measurable displacement, no structural fracture—but every sense in the human body agreed at once that *down* had just moved somewhere else.

Voss hit the console hard enough to crack the outer casing.

One of the wall displays imploded into static and did not recover.

The glass behind them bowed inward again—

further this time.

Not a suggestion.

A decision.

Shammy stepped forward into the center of the room.

The air around her tightened, invisible currents snapping into place like a storm front collapsing into coherence.

“Now,” she said.

Ace was already moving.

Not toward Voss.

Not toward the walls.

Toward nothing.

Or more precisely—

toward the point where *something was about to become everything*.

Mai watched her go, tracking not the motion but the timing.

This was the only part that mattered.

Not force.

Not direction.

Sequence.

“Find the start,” she said.

Ace didn’t answer.

She didn’t need to.

She felt it.

Not as memory.

Not as vision.

As pressure.

A point in the room where the world had once decided:

this is where it begins

And then been stopped.

Held.

Denied.

She stepped into that space.

The room reacted.

Hard.

The walls lurched inward.

The ceiling dipped violently.

The entire structure committed—

for the first time—

to the collapse it had been holding back.

Voss shouted something.

It didn't matter.

Sound had lost priority.

Everything was movement now.

Shammy's voice cut through it anyway.

"Hold it together!"

She spread her hands slightly—

not stopping the collapse—

never that—

but **containing the space in which it could complete.**

The difference was everything.

Without her, the event would have bled outward.

Taken the tower.

The block.

Maybe more.

With her—

it stayed *here*.

Contained.

Focused.

Allowed.

Mai stepped in behind Ace.

Close enough to feel the fracture lines in the moment itself.

"This is the anchor," she said.

Ace nodded once.

She could feel it now.

Clear.

Clean.

Terrifying.

Not a place.

A **decision point**.

The exact moment where:

- the structure failed
- the load exceeded tolerance
- the collapse became inevitable

And then—

never finished.

Her hand tightened on the katana hilt.

Not drawing.

Not yet.

This wasn't a fight.

This was alignment.

Behind them, Voss struggled to stay upright as the room tilted again—

further—

chairs sliding—

equipment tearing loose—

gravity asserting and retracting in stuttering pulses.

"What are you doing?!" he shouted.

Mai didn't look back.

"We're correcting the sequence."

"That's not how—"

The room *dropped again*.

Harder.

Longer.

This time, it didn't snap back immediately.

The ceiling came down.

The glass wall fractured—

not breaking—

but *deciding how it would break*.

Shammy's breath caught.

"Now!" she said.

Ace moved.

One step.

Forward.

Into the exact center of the failure.

And then—

she drew.

Not fast.

Not dramatic.

The blade slid free with a low, almost inaudible hum—green light catching along its edge, not illuminating the room but *defining it*.

For a fraction of a second—

everything stopped.

Not the way people say it.

Not metaphor.

Stopped.

No motion.

No sound.

No continuation.

The world held its breath.

And in that absolute stillness—

Ace cut.

There was no impact.

No resistance.

No enemy to strike.

The blade passed through—
through *what should have happened*—
through the incomplete collapse—
through the broken sequence—
and **finished it**.

The room collapsed.
Completely.
Silently.
Perfectly.
For one impossible instant—
everything happened the way it had always been trying to.
The ceiling came down.
The walls gave way.
The structure failed.
The weight found its path.
The collapse completed.
Every broken line resolved.
Every suspended moment *ended*.

And then—
it was over.

The room snapped back.
Not violently.
Not abruptly.
Just—

correctly.

The floor was level.

The walls were intact.

The glass stood unbroken.

The displays—

those that remained—

flickered back into stable output.

The air—

breathed.

Silence.

Real silence.

Not the held kind.

Not the waiting kind.

The kind that comes *after* something finishes.

Shammy exhaled slowly.

The pressure in the room eased.

Not all at once.

Gradually.

Like a storm that had finally decided to pass.

"It's done," she said.

Ace stood where she had cut.

Blade still in hand.

Not moving.

Not reacting.

Just—

there.

The moment had passed through her.

And left nothing behind to fight.

She lowered the katana.

The light along its edge dimmed.

She sheathed it without a sound.

Mai scanned the room.

Not visually.

Structurally.

Every line.

Every surface.

Every relationship between cause and effect.

Stable.

Complete.

No recurrence.

No residual loop.

No secondary fault lines.

She nodded once.

“The chain is closed.”

Behind them—

something didn't happen.

Voss staggered back against the console.

Breathing hard.

Alive.

Uninjured.

The room around him intact.

His systems—

mostly functional.

Everything exactly where it should be.

Except—

something was missing.

He looked at the displays.

At the lattice projections.

At the architecture he had built.

Still there.

Still running.

But—

wrong.

Not broken.

Just—

incomplete.

He reached for one of the control panels.

Adjusted a parameter.

Nothing happened.

He tried again.

The system responded.

But not the way it had before.

Not the way it was supposed to.

He frowned.

"What..."

Mai turned toward him.

“Your release,” she said.

He looked up.

“What about it?”

“It doesn’t happen.”

He stared at her.

“No,” he said. “That’s not—”

He stopped.

Because the words weren’t there.

Not in the way they should have been.

The presentation.

The final model.

The last step that made everything *work*—

He couldn’t see it.

Not clearly.

Not completely.

Like a thought that had almost formed—

and then never did.

“Something’s missing,” he said quietly.

Mai didn’t deny it.

“Yes.”

He looked at her.

Anger rising—

then stalling—

because something deeper was already settling in its place.

"You took it."

Mai's expression didn't change.

"No."

She gestured around them.

"We resolved the event."

Voss shook his head.

"That's not the same thing."

"No," Mai said.

"It isn't."

Shammy stepped closer to the window.

The rain fell straight now.

No sideways drift.

No hesitation.

Just gravity.

Clean.

Final.

She watched it for a moment.

Then spoke.

"It's quiet."

Ace glanced at her.

"Good quiet?"

Shammy considered that.

Then:

“Finished quiet.”

That was enough.

Voss looked at his system again.

At the work of years.

At something that—

in another version of this moment—

would have changed everything.

And realized—

it hadn't.

And wouldn't.

And couldn't.

He laughed once.

Not bitter.

Not amused.

Just—

empty.

“It was going to work,” he said.

Mai didn't argue.

“I know.”

He looked at her.

Then at Ace.

Then at Shammy.

Three people who had just—

what?

Saved the building?

Destroyed his future?

Corrected something he couldn't even fully perceive?

"What did you stop?" he asked.

Mai answered.

"The loop."

"And what did it stop?"

A pause.

Small.

Precise.

Then:

"The future your system would have erased."

That landed.

Voss didn't speak again.

Outside, the city continued.

Unaware.

Unchanged.

Exactly as it had been.

Except for one thing.

Somewhere—

in a version of events that no longer existed—

a tower had collapsed.

A system had been released.

And the world had become something else.

Now—

neither of those things had happened.

And no one—

except the three of them—

would ever know the difference.

© 2025-2026. "World of Ace, Mai and Shammy" and all original characters, settings, story elements, and concepts are the intellectual property of the author. All rights reserved.

Non-commercial fan works are allowed with attribution.

Commercial use, redistribution, or adaptation requires explicit permission from the author.

Contact: editor at publication-x.com

From:
<https://datavault.ws/> - **DataVault**

Permanent link:
<https://datavault.ws/doku.php/absolute:unfinished-ritual:chapter4>

Last update: **06/04/2026 09:44**

