

DISTRACTABLE INCIDENT

The safe house had finally gone quiet. Not the brittle silence that comes before a violet surge or a Foundation red-priority ping. Real quiet. The kind that settles into the bones like warm oil.

No alerts flashing across Mai's tablet. No fragment pressure clawing at the back of Ace's skull. No urgent calls demanding immediate extraction or debrief.

Just the low amber spill of a single floor lamp in the corner, the faint metallic hiss of Mai's kettle (still more threat than appliance), and the soft, steady glow of the big wall-mounted screen. The air smelled faintly of over-steeped black tea — the kind Mai insisted was "therapeutic" even though everyone knew it was closer to emotional blackmail in liquid form.

Shamaterazu lay sprawled facedown on the thick wool rug, long legs kicking lazily in the air behind her like a storm front that had called in sick. Her silver-white hair fanned out in a loose halo, catching the lamplight and giving off the occasional private *crackle* — not aggressive, just... content. Every few kicks the air around her gave a tiny, pleased pop.

Ace perched on the arm of the couch like she still hadn't committed to staying. One boot flat on the floor, the other knee drawn up, arms loosely folded. One emerald-frequency katana leaned against the wall beside her, blade still radiating faint warmth from earlier drills. The edge looked almost drowsy in the low light.

Mai sat on the floor with her back against the couch cushions, legs stretched out, tablet balanced across her thighs. She wasn't reading anymore. Her silver-blue gaze drifted between Shammy's lazy leg-swing and Ace's rigid silhouette. A small, private smile played at the corner of her mouth — the one that said *I know exactly how fragile this equilibrium is, and I'm going to enjoy every second of it while it lasts*.

On the screen, Mark, Wade, and Bob were in full chaotic freefall.

"—I'M TELLING YOU, THAT'S NOT HOW PHYSICS WORKS—"

Shammy let out a soft, delighted giggle — electric at the edges, like distant thunder remembering how to laugh.

"Humans are *amazing*," she murmured. "They just... shout reality into submission until it apologizes."

Ace didn't answer. Her lips twitched once — small, economical, devastating. That was her version of cracking up.

Mai exhaled through her nose, fond rather than annoyed. "This is *your* idea of recovery time."

"It's working so far," Shammy replied brightly, kicking her feet once more for emphasis. The air crackled happily in response.

The episode rolled on in comfortable background noise for another minute or two.

Then Mark stopped mid-sentence.

"...hold on."

Wade tilted his head like a confused puppy. Bob narrowed his eyes.

All three turned — not toward each other, not toward the set.

Directly into the camera.

Directly at *them*.

Ace went statue-still. Shammy's hair lifted half an inch off the rug and crackled like foil in a microwave. Mai set the tablet down very slowly, very deliberately, on the floor beside her hip.

Mark nodded once, calm as anything. "Yeah. You three."

Wade pointed straight through the screen. "The tiny murder gremlin. The silver one who looks like she's about to do my taxes *and* my soul. And the tall lightning person who's definitely judging us right now."

Bob leaned back, arms crossed. "Nice safe house, by the way. Very... post-apocalyptic cozy."

Silence stretched thin and sharp.

Mai spoke first — voice so calm it was almost polite. "Okay. That's new."

Shammy whispered, eyes bright with mischief: "Do we wave?"

Ace didn't blink. Didn't breathe. Just stared.

Mark leaned closer to the lens until his face filled half the frame. "Look, we don't know how you're seeing this, but you should probably check your phone."

Bob stage-whispered: "Or not. Might be cursed." Wade grinned wide. "Definitely cursed."

Mai's phone started ringing on the coffee table.

All three on screen turned toward the sound at the exact same moment — synchronized, almost rehearsed.

Caller ID: DR. BRIGHT

Ace's voice came out flat and final. "No."

The phone kept ringing.

Shammy whispered, delighted: "Pick it up. I want to hear the chaos."

Mai exhaled once, long and slow, then answered on speaker.

"Bright."

A pause. Her expression didn't change, but her eyes went desert-dry in half a second.

"...You did *what*."

Another pause.

Shammy sat up slowly, propping herself on her elbows, suddenly very interested. Ace tilted her head — small, predatory curiosity. Mai rubbed her temple like she was already calculating felony charges.

"Let me rephrase," Mai said, voice dangerously even. "What. Did. You. *Do*."

Bright's voice burst through the speaker, far too cheerful for the hour. "Good news! The prototype works."

"Which prototype."

"The video-generative containment experiment."

Silence.

Shammy covered her mouth with both hands but was already laughing silently, shoulders shaking.

Bright continued, utterly unfazed. "You know how cognitohazards propagate through symbols? We tried the inverse. Narrative anchoring through algorithmic media. Turns out if you feed enough recursive memetic loops into a streaming pipeline, you can index subjects *retroactively* via audience awareness."

Mai closed her eyes. Ace muttered under her breath: "...of course he did."

"Anyway," Bright said brightly, "congratulations. You're now partially indexed as an SCP."

The next ten seconds contained more profanity than Theta-24's collective rap sheet averaged in a month.

Shammy flopped back onto the rug, laughing so hard the lights flickered once. Ace pinched the bridge of her nose hard enough to leave marks. Mai looked like she was mentally drafting a very specific kind of termination order.

Bright carried on like nothing had happened. "Don't worry, it's temporary. Probably."

Mai's grip on the phone tightened. "Bright."

"Yeah?"

"...define temporary."

"No idea! That's the exciting part."

On screen, Mark whispered: "Yep. Definitely cursed." Bob nodded vigorously. Wade gave an enthusiastic thumbs-up.

Mai's voice dropped to lethal calm. "Bright. Remove us. *Now*."

"Can't. It stabilizes if the subjects acknowledge the narrative frame."

Silence.

Shammy lifted her head, eyes sparkling. "...so ignoring it makes it worse?"

"Exactly!"

Ace stood up in one fluid motion. Walked directly in front of the television. Stared straight into the lens.

“Stop watching us.”

Mark blinked. “...she talked back.”

Bob leaned away from the camera. “I don’t like this.” Wade grinned wider. “I *love* this.”

Bright’s voice shouted through the speaker: “DON’T ENGAGE IT DIRECTLY—”

Too late.

Shammy bounced up beside Ace and waved — big, cheerful, electric-blue static dancing between her fingers. “Hi!”

The image on screen glitched — hard. Just for a second. The pressure in the room shifted, like reality had hiccuped.

Mai whispered, half-exasperated, half-amused: “Shammy, maybe don’t interact with the narrative anomaly that is definitely not an anomaly.”

“Too late,” Shammy said, still waving.

The picture snapped back. Mark stared for a long beat, then said: “...okay we’re not doing that again.”

Bob nodded so fast his head was a blur. Wade looked openly disappointed.

Bright sighed through the phone — theatrical, fond. “Good news. It’s stabilizing.”

Mai: “Define stabilizing.”

“Mutual awareness achieved. Containment probability rising.”

Ace spoke without turning around. “...we are not an SCP.”

Bright, genuinely curious: “Technically you are now SCP-%%█-V.”

“*BRIGHT.*”

Long pause.

Then Bright asked, almost shyly: “So... what did you think of the episode?”

Mai hung up. Set the phone on the table with exaggerated care. Stared into the middle distance like she was calculating the exact force required to strangle someone through a phone line.

Shammy turned to Ace, eyes wide and innocent. “...can we still finish the episode?”

Ace sat back down on the sofa arm — slower this time. “Sure.”

A beat.

“...if they stop looking at us.”

On screen, Wade whispered: “She can hear us.”

Bob: “We’re doomed.” Mark: “Roll the outro. *Now*.”

The video ended. Black screen. Soft credits music.

The room fell silent again — warmer, heavier, almost normal.

Shammy flopped onto her back on the rug, arms flung wide. “That was fun.”

Mai: “That was a violation of at least twelve reality laws.”

Ace: “At least.”

Mai’s phone buzzed one final time.

BRIGHT: Okay small update: please don’t interact with any podcasts for the next 48 hours.

Ace reached over and turned the television off with a soft *click*.

“Next time we watch nature documentaries.”

Shammy perked up. “Dinosaurs?”

Mai leaned her head back against Ace’s leg, eyes closed, a tired smile tugging at her mouth. “Extinct things feel safer right now.”

The safe house settled back into silence. Normal. Almost.

Shammy reached up without looking and brushed her fingertips lightly along the inside of Ace’s ankle — grounding, casual, electric. Ace didn’t pull away.

Mai’s hand found Ace’s calf and rested there — steady, possessive in the quietest way.

The lamp flickered once, soft and fond.

And for once, nothing tried to eat them.

At least not tonight.

[blackfile](#), [ace](#), [mai](#), [shammy](#), [bright](#)

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