

# Excess Pressure Protocol Chapter 1 – Static Build

The safehouse smelled of wet concrete and old wiring. Rain still tapped irregular patterns against the reinforced glass high above the sub-level. Three lamps fought the gloom, one already flickering like it had given up.

Shammy hadn't stopped moving since they crossed the threshold six hours ago.

She paced the long side of the main room, 195 cm of storm-carried frame cutting slow arcs that made the air feel thicker each pass. Silver-white hair lifted at the ends without wind. A faint ozone bite clung to every breath. Every few minutes the temperature would dip two degrees, then spike again, like the room itself was trying to keep up and failing. Small metal objects on the low table—spent casings, a half-empty magazine—trembled whenever she turned.

Ace sat on the edge of the couch, compact frame folded tight, violet eyes half-lidded. Black hair with its uneven blade-cut layers stuck to the sweat at her temples. She hadn't spoken in forty-three minutes. Just tracked the motion. The dual emerald-frequency katanas rested against her knee, still humming below hearing, as if they too were tired of the show.

Mai leaned against the far wall, silver hair catching what little light there was. Silver-blue eyes moved in precise increments, mapping the jitter, measuring the intervals between Shammy's direction changes. She hadn't touched her disruptor pistol since they secured the doors. Didn't need to. The geometry of the room was enough.

Another pass. Shammy's fingers flexed, releasing a soft static pop that made the overhead bulb stutter.

Ace exhaled through her nose. Short. Sharp.

"You're bouncing," she said. Voice low, dry, carrying the weight of someone who had watched the same loop too many times. "Whole damn room's bouncing with you."

Shammy paused mid-stride. Electric blue eyes flicked toward the smaller woman. A grin tried to form, but it came out edged with leftover charge—too bright, too quick. "Can't help it. That raid went sideways. Not our fault, but the air still tastes like it."

Mai tilted her head a fraction. Mild curiosity sharpened the silver in her gaze. "Sideways is putting it politely. MC&D left a mess. We extracted clean. Still..." She let the sentence drift, one shoulder lifting in a precise shrug.

Shammy resumed pacing, slower this time, but the static crackle followed her like a tail. The temperature climbed again. Ace's violet eyes narrowed.

She pushed off the couch in one compact motion. Stood. The top of her head barely cleared Shammy's sternum even when the taller woman stopped.

Ace looked up. Not challenging. Just stating.

"We're fixing that tonight."

Shammy's grin settled properly this time. Eyes brightened to charged arcs. "Yeah?"

"Yeah." Ace's tone didn't rise. "Games. You, me, Mai. Release the excess before you rattle the

foundations loose.”

Mai’s lips curved—just enough to show interest, not enough to commit yet. She pushed off the wall, balanced precision in every step as she crossed the room. Stopped beside them, close enough that her silver-blue gaze could read both faces at once.

“Define games,” she said. Voice calm, but the sharpening at the edges gave her away. Structural curiosity engaged.

Ace shrugged one small shoulder. “The kind that burn it off. No holding back unless someone calls it. You in?”

Shammy laughed—low, electric. The air around her warmed noticeably. “Kid in a damn candy store doesn’t cover it. I’m in.”

Mai studied them both for a long second. Then she nodded once, silver hair shifting like liquid metal.

“Mildly interested,” she said. The words came out almost teasing, but the precision underneath made it a promise. “Set the rules when we start. Until then...”

She let the sentence hang. The room felt smaller now. Not from pressure, but from anticipation folding in.

Ace gave a single nod. Irreversible.

“Tonight, then.”

Shammy’s hair lifted again, but this time the static carried something closer to hunger than nerves. The rain against the glass seemed louder. Or maybe the room had simply grown quieter around the three of them.

The jitter was still there. But the shape of the night had already begun to change.

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