

Chapter 5 - Equalization

The lamp had steadied. Its cone of light fell across the couch in a softer pool now, catching sweat-slick skin and the slow rise-fall of three chests. Rain continued against the glass, steady and almost soothing. The air still carried ozone, but thinner—less crackle, more afterglow.

Shammy lay on her back, 195 cm frame taking up most of the length. One long arm curved around Ace, the other loosely across Mai's waist. Silver-white hair spread wild beneath her, faint ionized gradients finally still. Electric blue eyes half-lidded, no longer sparking. Her breathing had slowed to deep, even pulls that made the couch creak faintly with each inhale.

Ace had tucked herself against Shammy's side, compact body curled tight. Black hair with its violet sheen stuck to her forehead and neck. Violet eyes open but unfocused, staring at nothing in particular. One small hand rested flat on Shammy's stomach, fingers occasionally flexing as if testing that the pressure was truly gone. A faint red mark bloomed across her collarbone—mouth-shaped, already darkening.

Mai lay half-draped across both, silver hair fanned over Shammy's chest like liquid metal. Her balanced frame felt heavier now, spent. Silver-blue eyes were closed at first, then opened slowly, mapping the room by habit: the scattered clothes, the steady rain, the absence of jitter. One hand traced idle lines along Ace's spine—light, structural, checking alignment.

No one spoke for a long minute.

The static had left Shammy completely. The air around her felt neutral again, warm but not electric. Just presence. A low, steady hum that wrapped the other two like a blanket instead of a storm.

Ace shifted first. Small movement, irreversible even in exhaustion. She pushed up on one elbow, looked at Shammy's face, then across at Mai.

"Better," she said. Voice rough, dry at the edges. "You stopped bouncing."

Shammy's mouth curved—slow, lazy grin without the earlier hunger. "Yeah. Feels quieter in here." Her free hand lifted, fingers threading gently through Ace's uneven hair. No charge. Just touch. "Thanks for the suggestion."

Mai exhaled through her nose, almost a laugh but too tired for it. She turned her head, pressing a light kiss to Shammy's shoulder before resting her cheek there again. "Rules held. No one called horizon. Impressive."

Ace gave a small shrug, the motion barely disturbing the tangle. "Wasn't going to." Her violet eyes flicked to Mai, then back to Shammy. "Raid's gone. Just us now."

The three of them settled deeper into the cushions. Shammy's arm tightened fractionally, pulling them closer. Mai's fingers kept their slow mapping along Ace's back—down the fault-lines of muscle, over the faint emerald undertones that had quieted. Ace's hand stayed on Shammy's stomach, feeling the even heartbeat beneath.

Temperature had normalized. The room no longer fought itself.

Shammy's voice came low, almost drowsy. "Kid got her candy. Storm's parked."

Mai's response was quiet, precise. "Structure's back. Legible again."

Ace didn't answer with words. Just pressed her face into the curve of Shammy's neck for a moment, then lifted enough to meet Mai's silver-blue gaze across the taller woman's chest. A single nod. Small. Decided.

The rain kept its rhythm. Inside, the triad lay tangled and still—Ace's compact weight anchored between them, Mai's balancing touch steady, Shammy's atmospheric presence now a calm field rather than turbulence.

The excess had bled off. The system held.

No more bouncing.

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