

Chapter 10 — The Ending That Never Happened

Mai steps into the absence.

There is no floor.

No wall.

No edge.

Only—

definition.

And she brings it with her.

Behind her, the stage holds.

Barely.

Ace doesn't move.

Can't.

Because if she does—

distance becomes real.

And Mai is gone.

Inside the space—

there is nothing.

Not darkness.

Not void.

Just—

unfinished structure.

Like a sentence cut mid-word.

Mai exhales.

“This is where it broke,” she says.

The space listens.

Not reacting.

Waiting.

She doesn't look back.

She doesn't need to.

Ace is there.

Shammy is there.

Holding the edges.

Mai raises her hand.

Not to touch.

To define.

“There should have been an exit,” she says.

The space trembles.

Slightly.

“There should have been a door.”

A flicker.

Something tries to form.

Fails.

Mai's voice tightens.

"Not here."

A beat.

"Here."

She shifts her stance.

Repositions.

Not physically—

contextually.

The space adjusts.

This time—

something holds.

A line appears.

Faint.

Vertical.

A boundary.

Behind her—
the stage reacts.

The music lifts—
just slightly.

The children step forward.

All three now.

Ace's voice is low.

"It's working."

Shammy doesn't answer.

Her focus is absolute.

The air is stretched thin—
holding two realities apart.

Inside the space—
Mai continues.

“You were supposed to leave,” she says.

The line sharpens.

“You were supposed to go home.”

The boundary stabilizes.

The children reach the edge.

Stop.

They don't move further.

They're waiting.

Mai understands.

“Not alone,” she says.

The words land—
heavy.

The space responds.

The line becomes—
a door.

Not fully formed.

Not real.

But enough.

The first child steps forward.

Passes through.

And vanishes.

Not erased.

Released.

The stage shifts.

Stabilizes.

The music resolves—

one note further.

Ace exhales slowly.

“One.”

The second child moves.

Hesitates—

just for a fraction—

Then steps through.

Gone.

The pressure drops.

Slightly.

The third child remains.

Standing.

Looking at Mai.

“...you’re staying,” it says.

Silence.

Ace moves—

one step—

The air snaps.

Hard.

Shammy's voice cuts in.

"Don't."

Ace stops.

Barely.

Mai doesn't turn.

"Yes," she says.

The word lands—

final.

The space locks.

The door stabilizes.

Fully.

The last child steps forward.

Pauses.

“...thank you,” it says.

Then passes through.

Gone.

Silence.

The music resolves.

Fully.

For the first time—

complete.

Behind Mai—

the stage stabilizes.

Perfect.

Whole.

Ace's voice is sharp.

"No."

She steps forward—

And this time—

the space doesn't resist.

Because the structure is complete.

Mai stands inside the doorway.

Still.

“I told you,” she says quietly.

“You’re not alone.”

Ace stops.

Right at the edge.

“...then come back.”

A pause.

Mai smiles.

Not wide.

Not forced.

Real.

“I am,” she says.

The door—

begins to close.

Not violently.

Not suddenly.

Gently.

Ace’s hand tightens.

Shammy exhales.

The air shifts.

And something—

changes.

The pressure doesn't collapse.

It redistributes.

The door flickers—

once.

And instead of closing—

it folds.

Mai steps forward.

Out of the space.

Back onto the stage.

The doorway collapses behind her.

Gone.

The room holds.

Perfectly still.

And for the first time—

there is no expectation left.

No waiting.

No correction.

Just—

silence.

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