

# Chapter 5: Sync

The Arasaka job was three days away.

Three days to relearn a city that did not want to be understood.  
Three days to decide whether the triad still existed—or whether it had been left behind with everything else.

They didn't call it training.

Shammy just moved them through Night City.

Watson first. Then Heywood. Then the edges where maps stopped being useful and memory took over. Routes. Choke points. Patrol rhythms. The places where Arasaka watched—and the places where it didn't need to.

"Don't fight them on their turf," Shammy said. "You move through it. Fast. Clean. Invisible."

Mai's mind reached for structure.

Patrol timing. Surveillance density. rotational gaps—

"Stop."

Shammy didn't look at her.

"You don't calculate Arasaka. You survive it."

"Instinct," Mai said.

"Pattern recognition," Shammy corrected. "You watch long enough, you see the gaps."

The gaps were there.

Mai saw them.

Not as clean numbers anymore—those broke under the city's noise—but as distortions. Timing slips. Micro-delays. Human error inside machine precision.

Messy.

Real.

Usable.

Ace watched from the edges of every space they entered.

Not observing.

Tracking.

Movement. Light. Absence.

“The buildings aren’t just structures,” she said once. “They’re systems.”

Shammy nodded.

“They’re meant to see you.”

“Everything sees you,” Ace replied. “The question is whether it understands what it’s seeing.”

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Pacifica was where they tested it.

Broken concrete. Half-finished structures. Neon bleeding in from a distance that never quite reached the ground. The city had stopped caring about this place long ago.

Which made it useful.

“Show me,” Shammy said.

Ace moved first.

No signal. No warning.

Just absence.

Shadow sliding across angles that didn’t belong to geometry. Not fast—speed wasn’t the point. It was the *gap* she created. The moment where the world forgot to register her.

Mai felt the numbers try to come.

Engagement vectors. Cover ratios. escape probability—

“Stop calculating.”

Ace’s voice.

Close.

Mai’s hand found the wall.

Cool.

Solid.

Real.

The numbers didn’t vanish.

They lost priority.

She moved.

Not planned.

Not optimized.

Correct.

Position aligned before thought caught up. Disruptor already in hand, angle already covered. She knew where Ace would be.

Not because she solved it.

Because she remembered.

Then—

Shammy moved.

The air shifted.

Not violently. Not dramatically. Just... pressure. A tilt in the world. Debris lifted, paused, settled in patterns that ignored gravity long enough to matter.

The storm didn't announce itself.

It adjusted reality.

For one breath—

it aligned.

Ace.

Mai.

Shammy.

Three vectors.

One system.

Then it broke.

Shammy staggered.

The pressure collapsed. The air went still. The moment vanished like it had never existed.

"Sorry."

Too fast.

Too automatic.

"Don't," Mai said.

Her voice was flat.

But different.

"That wasn't failure. That was alignment."

Shammy shook her head once.

“I haven’t done that in—”

“Fifty years,” Mai said.

Silence.

Then:

“We do it again,” Ace said.

No emphasis.

No comfort.

Just direction.

Shammy exhaled.

“Again.”

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They didn’t rush it.

Morning: routes.

Afternoon: sync.

Night: stillness.

Piece by piece, it came back.

Not clean.

Not perfect.

But real.

Ace’s movement lost hesitation first. The shadow stopped asking permission. It just *was* again.

Mai’s grounding followed. Not calculation—structure. She stopped trying to solve everything and started holding what mattered.

Shammy took the longest.

Fifty years of solo work didn’t undo itself in three days.

Her storm didn’t trust the space yet.

But it started listening.

At night, they returned to the apartment.

Routine settled in without discussion.

Tea.

Always tea.

Ace checked the temperature like it mattered.

It did.

Shammy poured.

Mai held the cup.

Warm.

Solid.

Real.

The board filled the wall behind them.

Fifty years of connections. Names. Jobs. Dead lines drawn through lives that had ended without ceremony.

The chair still sat in the corner.

Until the fourth night.

Mai noticed it first.

“You added another chair.”

Shammy didn’t look up immediately.

“I did.”

“For practice,” Mai said.

Shammy hesitated.

Then:

“For you.”

Ace moved from the window.

Sat.

The new chair adjusted under her weight—barely audible, but enough to register.

Mai crossed the room.

Sat in the old one.

The one that had waited.

The difference was immediate.

The weight of it.

Fifty years of absence.

Now filled.

Shammy stood for a moment longer.

Looking at both of them.

At the chairs.

At the board.

At the life she had built without them.

Then she sat.

Three points.

One table.

Not perfect.

Not stable.

But aligned.

"You had partners," Mai said.

Not accusing.

Not analyzing.

Just stating.

"Yes."

"Not this."

"No."

That mattered.

"The sync is different," Shammy said. "You can work with people for years and never trust them."

Ace leaned back slightly.

"Trust isn't built," she said. "It's recognized."

Shammy looked at her.

Something shifted.

"Yeah," she said quietly. "That."

Mai's fingers tightened around the cup.

"The probability that trust—"

"—doesn't matter," Shammy finished.

Not sharp.

Not dismissive.

Certain.

Mai paused.

Then nodded once.

"Agreed."

That was new.

Shammy smiled.

Not the fixer version.

The real one.

"I see you," she said.

Simple.

Direct.

No decoration.

Mai held her gaze.

"I see you too."

Ace didn't speak.

She didn't need to.

The sync didn't require language.

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Outside, Night City kept moving.

Inside, the chairs were no longer empty.

The board still held fifty years.

The chair still held absence.

But now—

so did something else.

Presence.

Not complete.

Not restored.

But returned.

For the first time since the portal—

the triad sat in the same space.

And the system held.

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