

Ace & Mai - The Shadow and The Spark

Ace 10: Ashfall — Chapter 12 - Two Against the Void

Story: Ace & Mai - The Shadow and The Spark **Chapter:** 10.12 **Wordcount:** ~561 **Characters:** Ace, Mai, Rook, Kalyn, Jel, Mendax Theta, The Curator **Location:** The Echo's Wake **Arc:** Arc 1 - The Shadow and The Spark

Chapter 12 — Two Against the Void

They put the ship back together the way you put a life back together after a storm: by touching every small thing and deciding if it belongs.

The beads were gone. The threads were copper doing honest work. The annex had aged three decades in a week and become the kind of furniture no one misses. Mendax Theta would bore any myth that tried to sleep there. The Index, deprived of coat and calendar, sulked itself into irrelevance. Wake Confirmed retired like a bad song no one requests anymore.

Mai wrote the final memo.

HOUSE POLICY

- audit: retired
- alignment: retired
- consent: belongs to mouths only
- venue: kitchen

Jel read it and drew a straight line under each item, neat as a road. Kalyn tucked a bead she'd found in a boot heel into a jar of screws, where it could repent quietly. Rook fixed a hinge so it could creak again.

They gathered in the galley because that's where endings feel like beginnings. The clock kept time. The chair held its wrong angle with pride. The kettle sang when asked and stopped when told, like a friend.

"So," Mai said into the comfortable murmur of a ship being itself. "Staying?"

Rook nodded once, which was yes in his language. Kalyn tilted a blade and saw herself, which was also yes. Jel looked at the dome and found the courage to say, "I'd like to see what straight lines look like in other places," which was yes to both leaving and returning.

"Good," Ace said. "We'll need all three kinds."

They didn't toast. They ate. Warm food on real plates. Conversation that refused to audition. Laughter that didn't think it owed anyone an echo.

Later, under the dome, the two of them stood the way they stand when the room is honest: close enough that the air doesn't have to work to keep warm.

"Do we say it?" Mai asked, not because she doubted, because she liked the way words make rooms

behave.

“We don’t have to,” Ace said. “We built it.”

“Say it anyway,” Mai said, and the stars didn’t mind being asked to hold another sentence.

Ace turned to her and let winter give way to weather you can live in. “You,” she said.

Mai’s mouth softened. “You,” she said back.

Simple. Sufficient. The room took the words and placed them with care.

The recorder didn’t get an epilogue. That belonged to people.

Still, Mai flipped it on for one last line because houses like records when they’re kept by love.

“Case file. Note fifteen: Arc One concluded. Order: dissolved. First Voice: bound to ground and gone. Wake Confirmed: retired. Mendax Theta: ruined without spectacle. Curator: unmasked; resigned. Violet: home. Foundation: frequency only. Echo’s Wake: ours.”

She closed it. The click was a punctuation mark, not a ceremony.

The Echo’s Wake turned on a line through a sky that had stopped asking to be important. Out there, a hundred small storms had no names yet. The kitchen was clean. The knives were sharp. The clock kept time with character.

“Tomorrow?” Mai asked.

“Tomorrow,” Ace said.

They stood together and watched the void be itself, two against it, which is the right number when the house is finally quiet for all the right reasons. —

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