

ACT I — Raid in Motion (Finalized)

1. First Break

The alarm didn't start loud.

It started wrong.

Not the sharp, rising tone Site-19 used for containment breaches. Not the layered cascade of signals reserved for multi-wing failures. This one came in flat—almost polite—like the system wasn't entirely convinced anything was happening yet.

A single tone.

Pause.

Then another.

—slightly closer than it should have been.

—

Control Room B reacted anyway.

“Confirm source.”

“Sector C-4 corridor.”

“Cross-check.”

“Cross-check clean.”

“Then why am I hearing it?”

A beat.

“...you shouldn't be.”

No one followed that.

Because they were already moving.

—

2. Contact Without Warning

The first body hit the floor without a sound.

That was the second thing that was wrong.

Agent Rhee didn't even realize what had happened until she saw the reflection in the polished surface ahead of her—someone behind her, then not.

She turned.

Too late.

The corridor behind her wasn't empty.

It was occupied.

Black gear. Clean silhouettes. No wasted motion.

Chaos Insurgency didn't announce itself.

It removed obstacles.

—

A suppressed burst.

Two more down.

No shouting. No orders. Just execution.

One of the shooters adjusted mid-step—

not to correct aim—

but to match it.

—

“Contact—”

Her comm cut mid-word.

Not static this time.

Just absence.

—

The lead insurgent tilted his head slightly, as if listening to something the rest of them couldn't hear.

Then:

“Proceed.”

Flat.

No emotion.

They moved.

3. Something Else Is Moving

Two corridors over, the air shifted.

Not enough for most people to notice.

Enough for her.

Shammy stopped mid-step.

Just... stopped.

Ace nearly walked into her.

"...what."

Shammy didn't answer immediately.

Her eyes weren't on the corridor.

They were on the pressure inside it.

"...it's closing."

Mai didn't slow.

"Quantify."

"I can't."

A beat.

"...it's equalizing where it shouldn't."

That alone was enough.

Mai stopped.

Turned.

Didn't look at the walls.

Didn't look at the lights.

She looked at the relationships between them.

Processing.

—
Ace rolled her shoulders once, slow.

“Okay.”

A beat.

“That’s new.”

—

The alarm tone repeated.

Flat.

Patient.

Closer again.

—

4. Wrong Place, Right Time

They weren’t supposed to be here.

Not in this section.

Not during an internal shift.

Foundation liaison didn’t usually overlap with live containment corridors—not without a reason someone had signed in triplicate.

Mai knew that.

Mai had the documentation to prove they weren’t supposed to be within three sectors of this.

Which meant:

The system had already corrected for them being here.

—

“Movement.”

Ace said it like a fact, not a warning.

She’d already turned.

Already shifted stance.

Already there.

—

The first insurgent rounded the corner.

Saw them.

Didn't hesitate.

—

Gunfire broke the corridor open.

—

5. Baseline Violence

It was clean.

That was the third thing that was wrong.

No ricochets.

No unpredictable deflection.

Every shot went exactly where it was aimed.

Not accuracy.

Agreement.

—

Ace moved.

Not fast.

Not visibly.

Just—

Not where the bullets were supposed to be.

—

Mai pivoted half a step, disruptor already up.

She didn't fire.

Not yet.

She watched the vectors.

Watched the alignment.

Waited half a second too long.

—

The shot that should have hit her—
adjusted.

—

Then she fired.

One shot.

Precise.

Measured.

The insurgent dropped without drama.

—

Shammy didn't attack.

She adjusted.

The air thickened—not visibly, but enough that the next volley slowed just enough for Ace to cut through it.

Green arcs flashed once.

Then the corridor was quiet again.

—

Badger's voice cut in from somewhere behind a wall that technically shouldn't have allowed it.

<blockquote>

“Okay, so that's not normal personnel.”

</blockquote>

—

A second later, he appeared.

Like he'd always been there.

—

Theta-24 didn't enter rooms.

They arrived.

—

6. Walking War Crimes, On Schedule

Badger looked around.

Took in the bodies.

The Triad.

The still air.

The too-perfect lines.

“...yeah, this tracks.”

—

Grouse stepped in behind him, slower.

Eyes already moving.

Mapping.

Adjusting.

—

He paused.

Just for a fraction.

“...no.”

—

HeavenlyFather followed last.

Stopped just inside the threshold.

Didn't look at the bodies.

Looked at the space between them.

—

“...we should not be here.”

—

Badger snorted.

<blockquote>

“Little late for that.”

</blockquote>

—

Mai:

“Chaos Insurgency.”

Badger:

<blockquote>

“No kidding.”

</blockquote>

—

Ace tilted her head slightly.

“More coming.”

—

Grouse nodded once.

“...they’re not probing.”

—

Beat.

“...they’re retrieving.”

—

That landed.

—

7. Pressure Builds

Shammy took a step forward.

Then another.

Slower this time.

Like she was testing resistance that wasn’t supposed to exist.

“...it’s tightening.”

—

Mai:

“Define.”

—

Shammy’s jaw tensed slightly.

“...space is losing tolerance.”

—

A beat.

“...like it doesn’t want variation.”

—

Ace exhaled once.

Short.

Controlled.

“Great.”

—

Another tone.

Flat.

Closer.

Wrong again.

—

8. Escalation Vector

Gunfire again.

Closer.

Less controlled.

—

A Foundation squad fell back into view from the far end of the corridor—two still standing, one dragging a third between them.

They didn’t slow when they saw the Triad.

Didn't question.

Didn't ask.

—

“Containment breach—multiple—”

One of them got halfway through the sentence before a round took him clean through the shoulder.

He dropped.

Hard.

—

The insurgents pushed through the corner behind them.

Faster now.

Less surgical.

Still precise—

but one of them fired—

—and the shot corrected mid-flight.

—

Badger grinned.

Not because it was funny.

Because it was inevitable.

<blockquote>

“Ah. There it is.”

</blockquote>

—

Skullker moved past him without a word.

The first insurgent didn't even get a shot off.

—

Violence returned.

Messier this time.

Closer.

Real.

—

9. The Baseline Holds

For a moment—

Just a moment—

Everything worked.

—

Bullets behaved.

Bodies fell.

Movement had consequence.

—

Mai tracked vectors.

Ace cut lines.

Shammy held pressure.

Theta-24 erased anything that tried to become a problem.

—

It was brutal.

Efficient.

Understandable.

—

And then—

—

Something shifted.

—

Not loud.

Not visible.

—

But real.

—

Shammy's head snapped up.

"...no."

—

Mai felt it.

Not as pressure.

Not as energy.

—

As structure correcting.

—

Ace froze for half a second.

Which was already too long for her.

"...Mai?"

—

Mai didn't answer.

Because for the first time—

she wasn't reading the system.

—

She was ahead of it.

—

Her eyes locked onto the corridor behind the insurgents.

On a door.

—

A door that wasn't supposed to matter.

—

A door with a seam that wasn't straight.

—

A door that had already been corrected once.

—

The next shot—

—

missed.

—

Not by aim.

—

By agreement.

—

It struck where the door should have been—

—

and the door disagreed.

—

The light bent.

—

The sound arrived late.

—

The impact resolved after the effect.

—

And the world—

—

did not stop.

—

It failed to continue.

—

For exactly one heartbeat too long.

—

Then everything resumed.

—

Aligned.

—

But not the same.

—

END OF ACT I

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