

ACE 36 — “Open Without Exit”
Chapter 7 — Passive State

Nothing happened.

That was the change.

No pressure.

No sound.

No pull toward alignment.

The room—

if it could still be called that—

held.

Flat.

Empty.

Unresolved.

Ace didn't move.

Not because she was waiting—

because movement—

without purpose—

was input.

Mai noticed first.

Of course she did.

“...it stopped reacting,” she said.

Flat.

Shammy shook her head slightly.

“...no.”

A beat.

“...it stopped showing it.”

That tracked.

Ace's voice stayed low.

"...difference."

Mai answered immediately.

"Reaction requires timing."

A pause.

"Waiting does not."

Silence.

The surface—

remained meaningless.

But now—

it wasn't failing.

It was—

idle.

Shammy shifted her weight—

slow—

deliberate—

watching the air.

Nothing pushed back.

Nothing corrected.

"...it's letting us drift," she said.

Mai nodded.

"Yes."

A beat.

"Because drift converges."

That was the trap.

Without interference—

systems stabilized themselves.

Breathing.

Posture.

Attention.

All—

naturally aligning.

Ace moved first.

Small.

Unfinished.

Breaking the stillness before it could settle.

“...don’t hold neutral,” she said.

Mai agreed.

“Neutral becomes baseline.”

Shammy exhaled—

uneven—

forcing variation.

The air—

responded—

but lightly.

Not resisting.

Not guiding.

Just—

present.

“...it’s conserving,” she said.

Mai’s eyes narrowed.

“Yes.”

A beat.

“Saving resolution for a single event.”

Ace didn’t blink.

“...trigger.”

Mai nodded.

Silence held—

but not empty.

Waiting.

Shammy felt it next.

Not pressure.

Absence of resistance.

“...it wants us to relax,” she said.

Ace’s answer came instantly.

“...don’t.”

Mai added—

“Relaxation increases coherence.”

Shammy huffed a quiet breath.

“...yeah, figured.”

They moved again.

Not synchronized.

Never synchronized.

Ace stepped—

then paused mid-transfer.

Mai turned—

but didn’t complete the angle.

Shammy shifted—

but broke the motion halfway.

Three incomplete actions.

The system—

did not react.

That was worse.

“...it’s not taking partials anymore,” Mai said.

Ace’s voice dropped.

"...why."

Mai answered—

slower now.

Measured.

"Because partials don't resolve."

A beat.

"It's waiting for completion."

Silence.

That changed the rules.

Before—

they had disrupted by staying incomplete.

Now—

incompletion meant nothing.

Shammy frowned slightly.

"...so what does it need."

Mai's answer came sharp.

"Commitment."

A beat.

"Any full state."

Ace understood immediately.

"...then we don't finish anything."

Mai shook her head.

"No."

A beat.

"That gives it nothing."

Another.

"But we need something."

That was the edge.

Too little—

and nothing changed.

Too much—

and it locked.

Shammy's voice dropped.

"...controlled commit."

Mai's eyes flicked to her.

"Yes."

A beat.

"But not shared."

Ace stepped.

Full step this time.

Complete.

Intentional.

The system—

reacted instantly.

The surface—

flickered—

almost forming.

But—

Mai moved at the same moment—

in a different direction.

Full commitment.

Opposite frame.

The shape—

collapsed.

Failed.

"...that's it," Mai said.

“Conflicting completion.”

Shammy followed—

committed breath—

full—

deep—

but timed against both of them.

The air—

spiked—

then broke.

Three complete states.

None aligned.

The system—

hesitated.

Longer than before.

Not resolving.

Not deciding.

Ace moved again—

full step—

then immediate shift.

Mai committed—

then broke direction.

Shammy—

completed—

then reversed pressure.

Every action—

complete—

but incompatible.

The room—

lost priority again.

Not because they withheld—

because they overwhelmed.

“...it can’t pick,” Shammy said.

Mai nodded.

“Yes.”

A beat.

“Too many valid resolutions.”

Ace’s voice stayed flat.

“...then we keep giving it more.”

The system—

tried again.

One last time.

The surface—

began to form.

Clearer than before.

Stronger.

More defined.

Because this time—

it chose.

Not all of them.

One.

Mai saw it first.

“...no.”

Ace didn’t ask.

“...who.”

Mai’s voice tightened.

“...me.”

The shape—

locked to her frame.

Stable.

Real.

For her.

Shammy moved instantly—

hard break—

air spike—

pressure distortion.

Ace stepped across—

cutting the line—

destroying the angle.

The shape—

cracked.

Not gone—

but unstable.

Mai didn't hesitate.

She moved—

out of her own perspective—

breaking it herself.

The surface—

collapsed.

Gone.

Nothing.

Flat again.

Dead.

Silence—

real—

heavy—

held.

Shammy exhaled.

“...it’s getting desperate.”

Mai corrected—

quiet.

“No.”

A beat.

“It’s getting selective.”

Ace didn’t move.

Didn’t blink.

“...same thing.”

Mai didn’t argue.

Because it was.

Silence settled again—

but now—

they understood.

The system wasn’t trying to win.

It was trying to—

wait them into losing.

Ace’s voice dropped—

final—

certain—

“...then we don’t give it time.”

And this time—

they didn’t pause.

They moved—

immediately—

fully—

conflicting—

before the system could choose

which version of reality

to believe.

—

© 2025-2026. “World of Ace, Mai and Shammy” and all original characters, settings, story elements, and concepts are the intellectual property of the author. All rights reserved.

Non-commercial fan works are allowed with attribution.

Commercial use, redistribution, or adaptation requires explicit permission from the author.

Contact: editor at publication-x.com

From:

<https://datavault.ws/> - **DataVault**

Permanent link:

<https://datavault.ws/doku.php/canon:ace36:chapter7>

Last update: **13/04/2026 15:53**

