

# ACE 37 — Predictable Damage (Act 6: Escalation Without Movement)

They didn't chase him.

That would've been the obvious move.

---

Ace stood still for a second too long.

"...I hate that," she muttered.

Mai didn't answer immediately.

She was already replaying it.

Not the fight.

The *timing*.

---

"He changed the sequence," she said finally.

Ace glanced at her. "In English."

Mai looked up.

"He stopped reacting to us."

A beat.

"He started selecting outcomes."

---

Shammy shifted slightly.

The air didn't resist.

Didn't tighten.

Didn't misalign.

---

That was new.

“...it’s quiet,” she said.

---

Ace frowned.

“Good quiet or bad quiet?”

---

Shammy didn’t look at her.

“...waiting quiet.”

---

That landed wrong.

---

A sharp tone cut through the silence.

Mai’s comm.

---

She didn’t recognize the channel.

Didn’t need to.

---

She answered anyway.

“Mai.”

---

Static.

Then—

A voice.

Panicked.

“—we’re locked in—this isn’t responding—”

Cut.

Ace's head snapped toward her.

"That wasn't us."

---

"No," Mai said.

Already moving.

---

Another signal.

Different frequency.

Different source.

---

"Unit 3—taking fire—no visual—"

Cut.

---

A third.

"—doors cycling—can't—"

---

Silence.

---

Ace exhaled slowly.

"...okay."

A beat.

"...that's new."

---

Mai nodded.

"Yes."

---

Shammy's eyes moved.

Not to a direction.

To a *pattern*.

---

"He's not here," she said.

---

Ace didn't like that.

"...yeah, got that part."

---

Shammy shook her head.

"No."

A pause.

"He's not *anywhere*."

---

That stopped both of them.

---

Mai's expression tightened.

"...distributed execution."

---

Ace let out a short breath.

"Try that again."

---

"He's not running one scenario anymore," Mai said.

"He's running multiple."

A beat.

"At once."

---

Silence.

---

Ace looked down the corridor.

Then back the way they came.

---

“...so wherever we go,” she said slowly, “we’re already late.”

---

Mai didn’t answer.

Didn’t need to.

---

Another comm burst.

Closer this time.

---

“—movement predicted—left corridor—”

Gunfire.

---

Ace moved.

Immediately.

---

“Wait—” Mai started.

---

Too late.

---

Ace cut right.

Hard.

---

Fast.

Wrong.

---

The corridor opened into a wider chamber.

Not the same one.

Similar.

Different.

---

Bodies.

More this time.

---

Not clean.

Not aligned.

---

Half-finished decisions.

---

A guard had taken cover behind a pillar—

—and been shot from an angle that only existed if he'd moved too early.

Another had fired into empty space—

—and hit something that *should have been there*.

---

"...shit," Ace said under her breath.

---

Mai stepped in slower.

Taking it in.

---

"He's accelerating," she said.

---

Shammy followed last.

The air—

Didn't fight her.

Didn't respond.

---

"...he doesn't need to be present anymore," she said quietly.

---

Ace turned.

"So what, we just—"

---

"—no."

---

The voice cut through the room.

---

Calm.

Even.

Exactly where it needed to be.

---

"You're still thinking in sequence."

---

He stood above them.

Second level.

Looking down.

---

No rush.

---

No tension.

---

Mai didn't move.

"...you're coordinating multiple outcomes."

---

"Yes."

---

Ace took a step forward.

"Yeah? Looks messy."

---

He tilted his head slightly.

---

"It is," he said.

A pause.

"Right now."

---

Shammy's gaze sharpened.

"...you're letting it be."

---

He looked at her.

---

"Yes."

---

Another pause.

---

"I needed to confirm it scales."

---

Silence.

---

Ace's grip tightened.

"...people are dying."

---

He didn't react to that.

Not even slightly.

---

"They were already making the decisions," he said.

"I just removed the inefficiency."

---

Mai's voice dropped.

"You're not testing anymore."

---

"No."

---

Flat.

Certain.

---

"I'm optimizing."

---

The word hit harder than anything else.

---

Ace stepped forward again.

"No," she said.

---

“We’re stopping this.”

---

He watched her.

---

“You won’t,” he said.

---

Not a threat.

Not a guess.

---

A conclusion.

---

“Because you don’t know where to apply force,” he continued.

---

Mai’s jaw tightened.

---

“...yet,” she said.

---

A small pause.

---

Then—

Something shifted.

---

Not the room.

Not the air.

---

The *timing*.

---

Shammy felt it first.

“...no,” she said.

---

Ace didn't ask.

---

She moved.

---

Up.

Wrong angle.

Impossible line.

---

Forcing the space to pick one version.

---

Mai followed—

Not optimizing.

Breaking.

---

Shammy—

Forced the air to *choose*.

---

Everything snapped—

---

For a fraction of a second—

He was there.

---

Aligned.

---

Ace struck.

---

He moved.

---

Not fast.

Not desperate.

---

Just—

Already gone.

---

Again.

---

The space collapsed back.

---

Too clean.

---

Too late.

---

Silence followed.

---

Ace exhaled.

“...we almost had him.”

---

Mai shook her head slowly.

---

“No.”

---

A beat.

---

“He let us get close.”

---

Shammy looked up.

The second level was empty now.

---

“...he’s not measuring distance anymore,” she said.

---

Ace glanced at her.

“...what then?”

---

A pause.

---

Shammy’s voice dropped.

---

“Capacity.”

---

That landed.

---

Hard.

---

Mai closed her eyes for a second.

Then opened them again.

---

“...then we don’t hit him harder,” she said.

---

Ace frowned.

“...we hit him where it breaks.”

---

Shammy nodded.

---

“...if it breaks.”

---

Silence.

---

Rain started somewhere outside.

---

Perfect timing.

---

Too perfect.

---

Ace looked toward the exit.

---

“...next move,” she said.

---

Mai didn’t answer immediately.

---

Then:

---

“...we stop chasing outcomes.”

---

A beat.

---

“...and start breaking inputs.”

---

—

© 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

Check out our SubscribeStar page at <https://subscribestar.adult/konrad-k>

From:

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

Permanent link:

<https://datavault.ws/doku.php/canon:ace37:chapter6>

Last update: **20/04/2026 16:14**

