

Ace 38.4 - Equilibrium

The safehouse hummed with the low, constant thrum of Night City's undergrid, the kind of sound that never quite slept. Reinforced shutters half-closed over the single wide window let in fractured neon from the street below—pink bleeding into electric blue, then fading to the sickly green of a malfunctioning ad-panel. Inside, the air was cooler than the outside soup, filtered and recycled, carrying the faint metallic bite of the building's old life-support system. The room itself was sparse: one wide platform bed built low to the floor for stability, a single reinforced table, three mismatched chairs, and the faint scent of gun oil and yesterday's synth-coffee still clinging to the walls. No one had bothered to clean up yet. They never did on nights like this.

Ace stood by the table, compact frame still wired from the last forty-eight hours, violet eyes catching the shifting light like fractured prisms. She hadn't taken off her boots. "Two gigs in four days," she said, voice low, the dry edge in it sharper than usual. "City tried to eat us twice. First time was almost funny. Second time I stopped counting the bodies."

Mai sat on the edge of the bed, silver hair loose and catching the same neon, legs crossed at the ankle. She rubbed the heel of one palm against her temple, slow circles that didn't quite ease the pressure behind her eyes. "You held the line both times. We all did. But yeah... it sat heavy. Like the Foundation's shadow got longer every time we turned a corner." She glanced up, silver-blue gaze softening when it landed on Ace. "You're still carrying it in your shoulders. I can see it."

Shammy leaned against the far wall, all one hundred ninety-five centimeters of her filling the space without trying. Silver-white hair shifted faintly even though there was no draft, the faint ionized charge around her making the air feel just a little thicker, just a little safer. She didn't speak right away. She never rushed the first words after a run like this. Instead she pushed off the wall, crossed the room in three slow strides, and stopped behind Ace. One large hand settled on the smaller woman's shoulder—broad palm, warm, the subtle pressure drop in the air around her already easing the knot that had lived there since the second extraction.

"Words can wait," Shammy said, voice low and even, the kind of calm that pressed against the edges of the room and made the neon flicker less harsh. "The system needs equilibrium tonight. Not analysis."

Ace exhaled through her nose, short and sharp, but she didn't shrug the hand off. "System's been running on fumes since the second op. Felt like every shadow had teeth." She turned her head just enough to catch Shammy's electric-blue gaze over her shoulder. "You felt it too. Don't pretend you didn't."

Mai stood, moving with that precise grace that always made her look like she was calculating three moves ahead even when she wasn't. She crossed to them, stopped in front of Ace, and reached up to brush a stray black strand from the smaller woman's face. "We all felt it. That's why we're here. Not out there. Not moving. Here." Her fingers lingered, tracing the line of Ace's jaw, then down the side of her neck where the pulse still beat too fast. "Let us take the weight for a minute. All of it."

The silence that followed wasn't empty. It was full of the city's distant heartbeat and the three of them breathing in the same small space. Ace's shoulders dropped a fraction. Not much. Just enough that Shammy felt it through her palm and let her own atmospheric pressure ease another notch, the air around the triad growing still and warm, like the room itself had decided to exhale.

Mai leaned in first, slow enough that Ace could have stepped back if she wanted. She didn't. Their mouths met—soft at first, almost careful, the kind of kiss that remembered every bruise from the last two days without naming them. Ace's hand came up, fingers curling into the front of Mai's shirt, pulling her closer even as her other hand reached back to find Shammy's wrist and hold it there. Shammy's free hand slid around Ace's waist from behind, long fingers spanning the compact frame easily, thumb brushing just under the hem of her tank top where skin was still warm from the run.

No rush. The kiss deepened by degrees—Mai's tongue tracing Ace's lower lip, Ace answering with a quiet sound that wasn't quite a word. Shammy's presence behind her was solid heat and steady pressure, her taller frame curving slightly so her chin could rest against the top of Ace's head without crowding. The air around them thickened with static that wasn't quite electricity, just Shammy doing what she did best: equalizing, smoothing the jagged edges of the day until the room felt like the only safe place left in Night City.

Mai broke the kiss just enough to speak against Ace's mouth. "Bed. Now. We're not doing this standing up like we're still on the clock."

Ace's laugh was short, dry, the closest thing to humor she had left tonight. "Bossy tonight. I like it."

They moved together without needing more words. Shammy lifted Ace effortlessly—never a struggle, never a show of strength, just the natural consequence of their sizes—and carried her the few steps to the bed. Ace didn't protest. She hooked her legs around Shammy's waist instead, arms looping around her neck, and kissed her while they moved. The kiss was deeper now, less careful, Ace's teeth catching Shammy's lower lip just hard enough to remind her she wasn't fragile. Mai followed, shedding her jacket on the way, the fabric hitting the floor with a soft thud.

They landed on the bed in a tangle that somehow stayed deliberate. Shammy on her back, Ace straddling her hips, Mai sliding in beside them both. The mattress dipped under their combined weight and held. Dim neon from the window painted shifting patterns across bare skin as shirts came off—slow, hands lingering on every new inch revealed. Ace's compact frame looked even smaller against Shammy's long torso, violet eyes half-lidded now, the prismatic fracture in them catching the light every time her breathing hitched. Mai's fingers traced the faint scars along Ace's ribs, then lower, mapping the tension that still lived there.

"Still carrying it," Mai murmured, voice low and teasing but gentle. She leaned down to press an open-mouthed kiss to the center of Ace's chest, right over the sternum where the Neverborn resonance sometimes flared. "Let us pull it out of you."

Shammy's hands settled on Ace's hips, thumbs stroking slow circles against the waistband of her pants. "Breathe with me," she said, the words almost a physical thing, the atmospheric pressure in the room shifting again so each inhale felt deeper, each exhale easier. Ace's shoulders loosened further. She let her head fall back, black hair with its violet sheen spilling across Shammy's chest.

Mai worked Ace's pants down her legs, taking her time, kissing every new stretch of skin—inner thigh, the sensitive spot just above the knee, the sharp line of her hipbone. Ace's breath caught when Mai's mouth replaced her fingers, slow and deliberate, tongue tracing patterns that made the smaller woman's thighs tense and then relax in the same motion. Shammy held her steady, one hand splayed across Ace's back, the other tangled in Mai's silver hair, guiding without directing. The sounds Ace made were quiet, almost reluctant, like she still thought she had to hold something back. They didn't let her.

The rhythm built in layers. Mai's mouth and fingers working Ace open while Shammy kissed her slow

and deep, swallowing every gasp and every bitten-off curse. The city noise outside faded to nothing. There was only the wet sound of Mai's tongue, the low static crackle that lived in Shammy's hair when she got like this, and Ace's voice finally cracking on a single word—"Fuck"—that sounded like surrender and relief at the same time.

They didn't stop when Ace came the first time. Mai kept going, gentler now, drawing it out until Ace was shaking and laughing that short dry laugh again, the one that meant the edge was finally dulling. Shammy rolled them then, careful with Ace's smaller frame, settling her between them so the triad formed a single warm line—Mai at her front, Shammy curved behind her, long arm reaching over to pull Mai closer too. Hands moved without hurry. Fingers traced collarbones, the dip of a waist, the curve of a breast. Mouths found pulse points and lingered. No one spoke much. They didn't need to. The language was touch and breath and the way Shammy's atmospheric field made every caress feel like it reached deeper than skin.

Mai ended up on her back eventually, Ace between her legs now, returning the favor with the same focused intensity she brought to everything irreversible. Shammy knelt beside them, one hand between Mai's thighs alongside Ace's mouth, the other cupping Mai's breast, thumb brushing the nipple in slow circles that matched the rhythm Ace set. Mai's sharp mind finally quieted; her teasing voice turned into soft, broken sounds that filled the room like another layer of neon. When she came it was with Ace's name and Shammy's name tangled together, fingers tight in Ace's hair and the other hand gripping Shammy's forearm hard enough to leave marks that would fade by morning.

They shifted again. Shammy in the center this time, her taller frame stretched out like a storm finally allowed to rest. Ace and Mai took their time exploring her—Mai's mouth on one breast, Ace's smaller hand working between Shammy's thighs, both of them learning the exact pressure that made the air around Shammy spark and settle in the same breath. Shammy didn't moan so much as exhale in long, low waves that made the neon lights flicker in time. Her hands stayed gentle, one in each of their hair, grounding them even while her own body arched and trembled.

The final stretch was all three together, bodies aligned so every movement connected them—Ace riding Shammy's thigh while Mai straddled Shammy's other leg and leaned in to kiss Ace over the taller woman's chest. Hands everywhere. Mouths everywhere. The rhythm slow and deep and perfectly synced, the way only the triad ever managed after nights like this. Pressure built in layers again, each of them chasing the same release at the same moment. When it hit, it rolled through them like a single wave—Ace first, compact frame locking tight, violet eyes wide and unfocused; Mai following with a sharp cry that sounded like relief and victory at once; Shammy last, her atmospheric field flaring so the whole room felt charged and safe and alive. They rode it out together, bodies pressed close, breathing the same air, the city's distant roar finally irrelevant.

Afterward they stayed tangled, skin slick, breathing slowing. No one moved to separate. Shammy's arm was around both of them, long enough to hold them both against her chest. Mai's leg hooked over Ace's hip. Ace's face was pressed into the curve of Shammy's neck, one hand still loosely curled around Mai's wrist like she needed the anchor even now. The neon outside had shifted to deeper reds and golds, the safehouse quiet except for the soft sound of three people breathing in the dark.

They slept like that—warm, heavy, equilibrium finally restored.

Morning came with the kind of gray light that passed for dawn in Night City, filtered through the shutters and turning the room the color of old concrete and faint hope. Ace woke first, the way she always did, but this time she didn't tense. She stayed where she was, small body still wedged between the other two, listening to Mai's even breathing and the low static hum that lived in Shammy's chest even when she slept. Her hand rested on Mai's ribcage, thumb brushing slow idle

circles against warm skin. The tension from the gigs was gone. Not forgotten—just filed away where it belonged, no longer sitting in her shoulders or behind her eyes.

Mai stirred next, silver-blue eyes opening to find Ace already watching her. A slow, teasing smile curved her lips. “Still here,” she murmured, voice sleep-rough. “Good. Means we did it right.”

Shammy woke last, the way she usually did, her taller frame shifting carefully so she didn’t dislodge either of them. Electric-blue eyes opened, calm and clear. She didn’t speak right away. She just tightened her arm around them both, the atmospheric pressure in the room easing into something soft and steady that made the morning feel less like the start of another run and more like a continuation of the night before.

Ace pressed a kiss to the center of Shammy’s chest, right where the charge felt strongest. “City’s still out there,” she said, quiet, no edge this time. “But it can wait another hour.”

Mai laughed softly, the sound warm against Ace’s shoulder. “Make it two. We earned it.”

Shammy’s hand found both of theirs, long fingers lacing through, holding them in place. “Two hours,” she agreed, the words carrying the same calm finality she used when the triad needed to hold a line. “Then we move again. Together.”

The neon outside had faded to daylight gray, the safehouse still and quiet except for the low hum of the city waking up far below. The triad stayed where they were, bodies warm and entangled, the nervous system reset complete. Equilibrium held. For now, that was enough.

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