

# ACE 38 — Dead Channel (Act 5: The Wrong Call)

The street didn't return to normal.

It just slowed down enough to pretend.

---

People moved carefully now.

Not naturally.

---

Like they knew something was off—

But didn't know what.

---

Ace watched a pedestrian hesitate at a crossing.

Wait.

Step.

Stop.

---

"...this is going to snap," she said quietly.

---

Mai nodded.

---

"Yes."

A beat.

---

"It's not stable."

---

Shammy didn't look at the street.

---

She was looking past it.

---

"...someone's about to use it," she said.

---

Ace turned.

---

"...how do you know."

---

Shammy didn't answer.

---

"...because it's quiet again."

---

## □ THE SOURCE

Two blocks down—

---

A group.

---

Three people.

---

Gear.

Not polished.

Not amateur either.

Fixer-run crew.

---

One of them held a shard.

---

Mai saw it immediately.

---

“...that’s it,” she said.

---

Ace frowned.

---

“...they don’t know.”

---

“No,” Mai said.

---

“They think it’s just a dead line.”

---

**☐ INTERCEPT (FAILED)**

Ace moved.

---

Fast.

---

“Hey—!”

---

Too late.

---

The runner slotted the shard.

---

Activated the line.

---

## **NOTHING**

No signal.

---

No response.

---

No feedback.

---

Just—

Dead silence.

---

The runner frowned.

---

“...what the—”

---

## **THE MOMENT**

And then—

---

Everything slipped.

Not visibly.

---

Structurally.

---

The moment before the next action—

Gone.

---

## □ **BREAKDOWN**

One of the crew turned—

---

Too early.

---

The second raised his weapon—

---

Too late.

---

The third—

---

Didn't move at all.

---

## □ **COLLISION**

The sequence collapsed.

---

Not violently.

---

But completely.

---

One fired—

---

At nothing.

---

The second reacted—

---

To the shot that hadn't mattered.

---

The third stepped forward—

---

Into the wrong line.

---

## □ **RESULT**

Gunfire.

---

Real this time.

---

One down.

---

Second hit.

---

---

Third—

---

Frozen.

---

Not in fear.

---

Just—

Disconnected.

---

## □ **TRIAD ARRIVAL**

Ace hit the scene first.

---

“Drop it!”

---

No one listened.

---

Not because they refused.

---

Because the timing wasn't there.

---

Mai moved in.

---

Too careful.

---

Shammy—

Forced the air to tighten.

---

Trying to anchor something.

---

Anything.

---

## **TOO LATE**

The runner holding the shard blinked.

---

“...what was I—”

---

He looked down.

---

At the device.

---

At the channel.

---

## **FINAL ERROR**

He tried again.

---

Reflex.

---

Not logic.

---

## □ **SECOND ACTIVATION**

The space broke harder.

---

This time—

---

It didn't slip.

---

It dropped.

---

## □ **FULL COLLAPSE**

Everyone moved—

---

Wrong.

---

Simultaneously.

---

No sequence.

No order.

---

Just—

Actions without connection.

---

## □ **END**

Silence.

---

Hard.

---

Final.

---

Three bodies.

---

Still.

---

The shard—

---

Dark.

---

Like nothing had ever passed through it.

---

## □ **AFTERMATH**

Ace stood still.

---

“...shit.”

---

Mai didn't answer.

---

---

She was already processing.

---

“...it compounds,” she said.

---

A beat.

---

“Repeated interaction removes more structure.”

---

Shammy knelt beside the shard.

---

Didn't touch it.

---

“...it's not taking people,” she said softly.

---

“...it's taking the space between them.”

---

## □ REALIZATION

Ace exhaled slowly.

---

“...and they collapse into it.”

---

Mai nodded.

---

“Yes.”

---

## □ THE PRESENCE

A voice behind them.

---

Calm.

---

Too calm.

---

“They chose to repeat the action.”

---

They turned.

---

He stood there.

---

Watching.

---

Again.

---

## □ CONFRONTATION

Ace stepped forward.

---

“...you knew this would happen.”

---

He didn't deny it.

---

---

“Yes.”

---

A beat.

---

“I needed to see the limit.”

---

Mai’s voice dropped.

---

“...that wasn’t a test.”

---

He looked at her.

---

“No.”

---

A pause.

---

“That was data.”

---

## □ **SHIFT**

Shammy stood.

---

The air tightened slightly.

---

“...you’re letting it escalate.”

---

He nodded once.

---

“Yes.”

---

## ▢ FINAL LINE

Ace’s grip tightened.

---

“...then we stop it.”

---

He tilted his head.

---

“...you already are.”

---

A beat.

---

“But not fast enough.”

---

## ▢ EXIT

He stepped back.

---

Gone again.

---

## □ END STATE

The street—

---

Held.

---

Barely.

---

But now—

---

It had a cost.

---

Visible.

---

Real.

---

## □ FINAL BEAT

Ace looked at the bodies.

---

Then at Mai.

---

“...no more watching,” she said.

---

Mai nodded.

---

“No.”

---

Shammy looked at the space between them.

---

“...no more contact,” she said.

---

Silence.

---

This time—

---

Heavy.

---

And earned.

---

—

© 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:ace38:chapter5>

Last update: **20/04/2026 16:38**

