

ACE 38 — Dead Channel (Final Act: Closing the Gap)

They didn't move the bodies.

Not yet.

Ace stood still for a second too long.

Not frozen.

Not hesitating.

Thinking.

"...we're done reacting," she said quietly.

Mai nodded.

"Yes."

Shammy didn't look at them.

"...it's still here," she said.

A beat.

"...but it's thinner."

□ THE SHIFT

Mai exhaled slowly.

"...because it was used," she said.

Ace frowned.

"...that made it worse."

"Yes," Mai replied.

A pause.

"But also... finite."

Silence.

Ace blinked.

"...explain."

Mai looked at the shard.

"Every interaction removes structure," she said.

A beat.

“But it doesn’t regenerate instantly.”

Shammy’s head tilted.

“...it needs time to stay empty,” she said.

That landed.

□ REALIZATION

Ace’s expression shifted.

“...so we hit it before it resets.”

Mai nodded.

“Yes.”

A beat.

“We force it to collapse.”

□ THE RISK

Shammy stepped closer to the shard.

The air tightened.

“...that means using it,” she said.

Ace didn't like that.

“...bad idea.”

Mai didn't argue.

“No,” she said.

A pause.

“Correct idea.”

Silence.

□ THE PLAN

Mai picked up the shard.

Didn't activate it.

Just held it.

"We don't use it normally," she said.

A beat.

"We overload the gap."

Ace crossed her arms.

"...in English."

Mai met her gaze.

"We create too many non-decisions at once."

Shammy exhaled slowly.

"...we collapse the space it needs."

Ace smirked faintly.

"...now that I like."

□ EXECUTION

They didn't spread out.

They stayed close.

Wrong for combat.

Right for this.

Mai activated the shard.

⚠ NOTHING

No signal.

No response.

Just—

Silence.

□ THE PUSH

Ace moved.

Fast.

Then stopped—

Too early.

Shammy stepped—

Then didn't.

Mai initiated—

Then aborted.

All at once.

No sequence.

No resolution.

□ OVERLOAD

The space broke.

Hard.

Not like before.

Not slipping—

Collapsing.

The gap couldn't hold.

Too many incomplete moments.

Too many missing connections.

VISUAL

The air twisted—

Not visibly—

But *felt*.

Timing snapped.

Then failed to reassemble.

CRITICAL POINT

Mai held the shard.

“...now,” she said.

Ace didn’t hesitate.

She took it—

And forced it active again.

Immediately.

□ **SECOND OVERLOAD**

No recovery.

No reset.

The system didn’t have time.

The gap—

Collapsed.

□ **SILENCE**

Real silence.

Not empty.

Complete.

□ **RESULT**

The pressure lifted.

Instantly.

The street—

Aligned.

Movement returned.

Timing—

Normal.

□ **CONFIRMATION**

Shammy exhaled.

The air flowed.

“...it’s gone,” she said.

Mai nodded slowly.

“Yes.”

A beat.

“For now.”

□ FINAL PRESENCE

A voice behind them.

Quieter than before.

“...inefficient,” he said.

They turned.

He stood there.

Less certain now.

Not broken.

But—

Adjusted.

▢ FINAL EXCHANGE

Ace stepped forward.

“...we broke it.”

He nodded once.

“Yes.”

A pause.

“You forced a collapse.”

Mai met his gaze.

“And you lost your dataset.”

Silence.

That hit.

□ TRUTH

He didn't deny it.

"No," he said.

A beat.

"I lost *this instance*."

Shammy's voice dropped.

"...you'll try again."

He looked at her.

"Yes."

□ END

Ace smirked faintly.

"...good."

A beat.

“We’ll break it again.”

He didn’t respond.

This time—

He left immediately.

No observation.

No delay.

Gone.

□ **FINAL STATE**

The street moved normally.

People walked.

Cars flowed.

Sound aligned.

No hesitation.

No gaps.

□ LAST LINE

Mai exhaled slowly.

“...it had shape,” she said.

Ace nodded.

“...yeah.”

A beat.

“...and now it doesn't.”

Shammy looked at the space between them.

Quiet.

Whole.

“...for now.”

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