Black File — Unscheduled Entry

Ace39.4 - Engine That Should Not Be

The café was too high for traffic noise.

That was the first lie the city told them.

Mai noticed it first, because Mai always noticed when systems stopped behaving like systems. Her fingers paused around the cup. Silver-blue eyes shifted—not to the street below, but past it, toward the far end of the avenue where the neon haze had begun to tremble.

“…do you hear that?”

Ace did.

She had heard it before.

Not often. Not safely. Not in any context where sane people remained sane for very long.

At first it was only a distortion in the distance. A low, metallic snarl with something wrong folded under it. Then the sound climbed—too fast, too sharp, dragging itself up the buildings like claws against glass.

Shammy’s posture changed by a millimeter.

The air tightened.

Mai set her cup down.

“No.”

Ace was already leaning forward.

The engine screamed again.

Not mechanical.

Mocking.

A black shape tore into view far below, cutting between lanes with impossible precision. The Supra moved like traffic laws were suggestions written by prey. Red-black reflections slid over its bodywork. Headlights burned too bright. The exhaust note cracked across the avenue like a demon clearing its throat before delivering bad news.

For half a second, nobody spoke.

Then Ace’s expression went completely flat.

“…Konrad.”

Mai closed her eyes.

Just once.

As if internally filing a complaint with reality.

Shammy tilted her head, charged-blue eyes following the car’s impossible path.

“That is him?”

Ace’s fingers curled slowly against the edge of the table.

“Oh, that is absolutely him.”

Below, the Demon Supra screamed through an intersection, missed a delivery van by an angle that did not exist, and left three autonomous taxis braking in philosophical despair.

Ace stood.

Not dramatically.

Worse.

Calmly.

“Konrad,” she said, voice low enough that the glass in front of her caught a faint emerald reflection, “you smug, theatrical, abyss-polished bastard, I am going to kick you so far into the lowest hell that demons start charging admission to watch you land.”

Mai opened one eye.

“That was specific.”

“I’ve had time.”

The Supra vanished beneath an elevated rail line, engine howling once more.

Almost like laughter.

Almost like an invitation.

Shammy’s hair lifted faintly in the static gathering around her shoulders.

“He wants to be noticed.”

Ace turned from the window.

“No. He wants us to know he *could* have arrived quietly, and chose that instead.”

Mai reached for her coffee again, because sometimes civilization had to be defended symbolically.

“Then the question is not why Konrad is here.”

Ace looked at her.

Mai sighed.

“It is what rule he thinks he is breaking this time.”

For a moment, the table went silent.

Outside, the last echo of the Demon Supra faded into Night City’s rain-soaked arteries.

Then Ace muttered, with sincere venom:

“Not here. Not now. Not with that stupid car.”

A pause.

“And definitely not before I finish my coffee.”

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