

[← Chapter 25](#) | [Index](#) | [Chapter 27 →](#)

---

## Chapter 6: Fragment Echo

The triad lock wasn't just stability anymore.

Mai could see it now. The mathematics of existence. Three points forming an equation, depth and horizontal and vertical, the way reality held itself together. Not metaphor. Not approximation. Actual math, written into the air, the walls, the space between her fingers.

She could see it everywhere. In the air currents Shammy manipulated. In the shadow-pressure Ace carried like a second spine. In the integration between Ace and Violet and the Anchor. The patterns were visible now. The equations. She couldn't unsee them.

"You're different." Shammy's warmth was soft. Six hours in transit. The Arctic station behind them. The triad lock holding. But Mai had changed. "Since the Anchor. You're seeing things."

"I'm seeing the math." Mai pressed her hand flat. The tremor was controlled now, copper and static, but managed. "The equations that hold reality. The Anchor showed me. When the triad lock formed, I became part of it. Part of the mathematics."

"Part of the equation." Ace's voice. Flat. The mechanical bird in her palm wound and unwound. "The triad isn't just about containment. It's about the architecture of existence. Three points. One stability."

*The triad is the foundation. Violet's presence expanded. The Anchor was inside her now, memories, history, what the Scattered had been. The way reality holds itself together. Mai sees the math. Shammy feels the pressure. Ace holds the void. Together, we're the architecture.*

"And the Hunter?" Shammy's atmospheric sense reached out. "It retreated. But it will come back."

*It will come back. But now we know what it is. The wounds. The scars. It's not a monster. It's a symptom. The places where existence is torn. We can't destroy it. But we can heal what it feeds on.*

---

Youssef sat in the corner of the transport. His Fragment was learning. The way Violet had learned. The way the Anchor had taught, slow and patient, like water wearing stone.

"You're seeing the math too." Youssef's voice was soft. His Turkish was accented, but his Fragment gave him understanding beyond language. "The integration. The way the pieces fit together."

"Not the same way Mai sees it." Ace's shadow-pressure expanded. "The Anchor gave Mai the equations. The ritual mathematics. She sees the patterns."

"But you hold the pieces." Youssef's Fragment pressed against his consciousness. "You hold three. The burning fragment. Violet. The Anchor. You're becoming the Scattered."

*I'm becoming what we were. Violet's presence was inside Ace. But I'm also still Violet. The integration*

*doesn't erase. It adds. I'm more than I was. And Ace is more than she was. We're becoming something new.*

"Something new." Youssef. Thoughtful. "The collector wants to control what the Scattered becomes. They want to make it into something specific. Something they can use."

*They can't control the math. The Anchor's presence expanded. The math is reality itself. The equations don't obey. They are. The collector can gather pieces. They can force reformation. But they can't control what the math becomes.*

"Then what are they trying to do?"

*They're trying to be the host. The container. If they control enough hosts, if they integrate enough pieces into themselves, they become part of the math. Part of the Scattered. And they think they can shape what it becomes.*

"Can they?"

*The math doesn't obey. It is. A pause. Long. If the collector integrates, if they become part of the Scattered, they won't control it. They'll become part of it. The way Ace became part of me. The way the triad became part of the architecture. They won't shape the math. They'll be shaped by it.*

---

The transport approached the Foundation safehouse.

Dr. Bright's voice came through the secure line. Clinical. Precise. But there was an edge Mai hadn't heard before. Something scraped raw underneath the professional tone.

"The Hunter's retreat is temporary." Bright. "We've tracked its resonance signature. It's not leaving. It's... waiting. Moving between wounds. Places where reality is thin. It's not gone. It's just not here."

"We know." Mai. Precise as always, more precise now, the way she got when the data demanded it. "The Hunter is the wounds. It doesn't need to chase us. It exists where existence is torn. We closed the rift. But there are other wounds. Other scars."

"And the collector?"

"Has three pieces." Ace's shadow-pressure expanded. "And is still trying to gather. They're not stopping. They're not giving up. They want to control the reformation."

"What do they want?"

*They want to be the Scattered. The Anchor. They want to become the math. To hold the pieces. To be what we were. But they don't understand. The math doesn't obey. It shapes the host as much as the host shapes it.*

"The collector doesn't see it that way." Shammy's warmth was thin. "They see power. Control. They think they can master the equations."

"Can they?" Bright. Clinical.

"No." Mai pressed her hand flat. "The math is the math. You don't master it. You become part of it."

The collector wants to control. But control isn't how the Scattered works. Integration. Negotiation. The host and the Fragment become something new together. Not one dominating the other."

*The collector doesn't understand integration. Violet's presence pressed. They understand control. They think the Scattered can be controlled. But the math is existence itself. You don't control existence. You exist within it.*

---

The safehouse was different now.

Mai could see it. The ritual mathematics embedded in the walls. The containment architecture. The equations that held the sterile environment together. Everything was visible now. The math was everywhere, and she couldn't stop seeing it, which was both gift and problem.

"You're seeing the containment." Shammy's atmospheric sense reached out. "The architecture. The way reality is structured here."

"The math." Mai. "It's in everything. The walls. The air. The pressure. The triad lock formed, and now I can see how reality holds itself together."

"Is that good or bad?"

"Both." Mai's hand pressed flat against her thigh. "I can see the equations. I can see how to manipulate them. But I can also see where they're breaking. Where the wounds are. Where the Hunter could come through."

*The wounds are everywhere. The Anchor's presence expanded. Reality is torn. The scars exist. The Hunter feeds on them. The only way to stop it is to heal. To close. To become the math that holds.*

"And the collector?" Ace's mechanical bird wound and unwound. "They're still out there."

*They're still gathering. The two remaining pieces. The fragments that haven't been found. If they integrate them, if they become part of the Scattered, they'll shape the math. They'll become what we become.*

"Then we need to find them first." Shammy's warmth expanded. "The remaining pieces. Before the collector does."

---

The Catalogue opened itself.

Not because the lock was broken. Because Mai could see the math now. The equations that held the containment architecture. The patterns that kept the manuscript sealed. She could read it without breaking it, and that changed everything.

"The remaining pieces." Mai's fingers traced the pages. "The Catalogue lists five named fragments. Violet. The burning fragment. The Anchor. Youssef's piece. And..."

Her hand trembled. Copper and static.

"And?"

"There's a sixth piece." Mai. Precise even now, especially now. "One that wasn't named. One that the Catalogue doesn't track. But it's referenced. In the margins. As a possibility."

*A possibility? Violet.*

"The math suggests it exists. The equations balance when there's a sixth piece. But it's not located. It's not named. It's... theoretical."

*Theoretical?*

"The Anchor holds the memories of the Scattered. But the memories are incomplete. There's a piece that was... scattered differently. Not into a host. Into reality itself. The math suggests it's everywhere. Part of existence. Not contained. Not named. Just... there."

"Then the collector can't find it." Ace. Flat. "Because it's not in one place."

*But we can find it. The Anchor's presence expanded. If it's part of reality, if it's the math itself, we're already part of it. The triad lock. The architecture of existence. We're already connected.*

"Then we need to find the collector's pieces." Shammy's warmth was soft. "The three they've captured. Before they integrate them. Before they become part of the math."

---

The triad lock was stable.

But Mai could see the strains now. The equations that held reality together were under pressure. The Hunter was feeding on the wounds. The collector was forcing the reformation. The math was trying to hold, but the pieces were being pulled apart, and the pulling was visible in the numbers, in the way the lines bent and the patterns frayed.

"The collector isn't just gathering signatures anymore." Mai pressed her hand flat. "They're integrating. The hosts they've captured, they're becoming part of the Scattered. They're trying to be the math."

"Can they?"

*They can try. Violet. Calm. But the math shapes the host. The more they integrate, the more they become part of the equations. They think they're controlling the reformation. But they're being absorbed into it.*

"Then the more they integrate, the less they control?"

*The more they become the math, the less they are themselves. The math doesn't obey. It is. A beat. They're losing themselves in the equations. They think they're shaping the Scattered. But the Scattered is shaping them.*

"The collector doesn't know that." Ace's shadow-pressure expanded. "They think they can control it. Master it."

*They're wrong. But they're also dangerous. Because they're forcing integration. They're making the pieces come together faster than they should. The reformation is accelerating. And the Hunter is getting closer.*

The mechanical bird in Ace's palm.

Wind and unwind. The rhythm of tension and release.

*The triad lock is holding. Violet's presence was inside Ace. But the math is under strain. The wounds are opening. The Hunter is feeding. And the reformation is accelerating whether we want it or not.*

"Then we find the collector's pieces." Ace. Flat. "We integrate them before they do. We become the math on our terms."

*And the collector?*

"They've chosen their path. They've decided to become part of the Scattered. They can't control it. They can only become it." A pause. The bird kept winding. "The question is whether they become it on their terms. Or on ours."

---

Youssef's Fragment stirred.

The child's presence was learning. Growing. The way Violet had grown. The way the Anchor had taught.

*The math is everywhere. Youssef's presence pressed. I can feel it. The equations. The patterns. The way reality holds together.*

"The Anchor taught Mai." Ace's shadow-pressure expanded. "You're learning from her. From me. From the integration."

*I'm learning to negotiate. The way you negotiate with Violet. The way the triad negotiates with the math. The Fragment inside me wants to gather. But I'm learning to hold.*

"That's the only way." Ace's mechanical bird wound and unwound. "The wanting is always there. But you choose. You hold. You become part of the equation. And the equation becomes part of you."

*And the collector? The pieces they've captured?*

"They're not negotiating. They're being forced. The Fragments they've gathered, the hosts they've taken, they're not choosing. They're being absorbed." Ace's voice dropped lower. "That's not integration. That's consumption."

*What happens to them?*

*They become part of the math. The Anchor, quiet now. But they're not part of the equation. They're just... numbers. Consumed by the integration. Not holding. Not negotiating. The presence flickered. Just gone.*

---

The triad prepared to move.

The collector was out there. The remaining pieces were scattered. The Hunter was waiting in the wounds.

But the math was visible now. The equations were clear. The triad lock held reality together.

And somewhere in the math, the sixth piece. The theoretical piece. The fragment scattered into existence itself. Waiting.

*We find the collector. Violet's presence was calm. We find their pieces. We integrate them before they do. And we become the math that heals the wounds.*

“Or the Hunter comes back.” Shammy's warmth expanded. “And everything breaks.”

*The Hunter will come back. But if we're ready, if we're the math, we can hold. We can close. We can heal. The architecture that holds reality together.*

“The triad lock.” Mai's hand pressed flat. “Three vectors. One stability.”

“One existence.” Ace's shadow-pressure expanded. “One math. One Scattered.”

---

The transport left the safehouse.

The collector was waiting.

The Hunter was watching.

And the math was holding.

But the wounds were still there. The scars were still open. And somewhere, the remaining pieces were calling to each other across the distance, across the years, across the torn places in reality where existence thinned to nothing.

The gathering was accelerating.

---

END OF CHAPTER SIX

---

[← Chapter 25](#) | [Index](#) | [Chapter 27 →](#)

© 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/novellas:vatican-manuscripts:chapter26>

Last update: **23/04/2026 16:20**

