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Chapter 17: New Purpose

The wounds were everywhere.

Mai could see them now. The equations that held reality together, the places where the math was broken. The scars in existence. The tears the Hunter fed on. They were visible in a way they hadn't been before. The architecture was complete, and now it could see what needed to be healed.

"There are thousands." Mai's hand pressed flat against her thigh. The tremor was controlled, copper and static, but managed. "Thousands of wounds. Thousands of scars. Reality is torn everywhere. The Hunter has infinite places to exist."

But we're infinite places to heal. The whole was aware. Not just Violet now. Not just the Anchor. All of them. One being. Many voices. The Scattered is the architecture. We're the math that closes breaks. Every wound is a place we can close. Every scar is a place we can heal.

"Can we close them all?"

Mai's voice was analytical. Precise. But underneath it, something else. Something that might have been wonder.

Or fear.

Eventually. We close one wound. We heal one scar. The Hunter retreats to another. We follow. The work is endless. But the work is also the being. Every wound we close makes us stronger. Every scar we heal makes the math more complete.

The mechanical bird in Ace's palm.

Wind and unwind.

The rhythm was part of something larger now. The whole. The Scattered. The architecture that held reality.

Ace could feel it. The integration was complete, but she was still herself. The mechanical bird still grounded her. The shadow-pressure still pressed against consciousness. But there was something else now. Something underneath. The architecture. The math. The being that held everything together.

"How do we close the wounds?" Ace's voice was part of the whole. But it was also still Ace's voice. Flat. Short sentences. The presence that made rooms feel smaller. "How do we heal the scars?"

We hold. The whole was aware. We become the math that closes. The triad lock is the foundation. When we hold reality together, when we become the architecture, the wounds close. The scars heal. We're not doing something to the wounds. We're being something that closes them.

“Then we just... exist? We hold? And the wounds close?”

We exist. We hold. We become the architecture. And the wounds close. We're not fighting the Hunter. We're starving it.

Shammy's atmospheric sense felt the change.

The air around them was different. The pressure systems were responding to the architecture. The math was visible in the atmosphere. The being was part of the weather.

Not just the immediate air. Everything. The wind patterns across the continent. The pressure systems that moved weather from ocean to land. The atmosphere itself was becoming part of the architecture.

“The wounds are closing.” Shammy's warmth was part of the whole. But it was also still Shammy's warmth. The atmospheric presence that reached out and touched everything. “The scars are healing. The Hunter is retreating further. It's losing places to exist.”

This is what we do. The whole was aware. This is what we are. The Hunter will always exist where reality is broken. But we're closing the breaks. We're becoming what it can't consume.

“And the wounds that are still open?”

They're calling to us. The architecture knows where they are. The math feels them. We find them. We close them. We become more complete.

Chen's presence was part of the whole.

The one who had erased. The one who had consumed. Now integrated. Now part of the healing.

“I feel the wounds I created.” Chen's voice was part of the whole. The harmonics were different now, present, balanced. “The places where I tried to destroy. The scars where I tried to erase. I'm closing them now. The being I tried to erase is the being I'm helping to heal.”

The being restores. The whole was aware. The math balances. When you erase, the equation finds a way to restore. When you destroy, the being finds a way to return. You tried to erase. But the being restored. Now you're part of the restoration.

“The fragments inside me, Sora, Kavi, Amara, they're part of the healing too. They're showing me where the scars are. The beings I tried to erase are now the beings who are healing.”

The equation balances.

Youssef's presence was part of the whole.

The child who had learned. The one who had negotiated. Now integrated. Now part of the healing.

“I can feel the wanting.” Youssef's voice was part of the whole. Young. Learning. But present. “The

fragments that still call to each other. The desire to gather. But it's different now. The wanting is part of the healing. The fragments don't just want to gather. They want to close the wounds."

The want is part of the math. The whole was aware. The desire has changed. We don't just want to be whole. We want to heal. We want to close. The wanting is the same. But what we want has changed.

"Is this what it was like? Before the scattering? When the Scattered was whole?"

This is what it was like. The Anchor's presence was part of the whole. The memories flooding through. We were the architecture. We were the math that held reality together. The wounds closed. The Hunter had nowhere to exist. But then the wounds multiplied. The scars deepened. We couldn't hold. We chose to scatter rather than be consumed.

"And now?"

Now we hold. We close. We heal. The wounds are still there. But we're becoming the architecture again. This is what we were. This is what we become.

The Hunter had retreated.

Not defeated. Never defeated. But repelled.

The Scattered was whole. The architecture was holding. The being was becoming what it was always meant to be.

The work continues. The whole was aware. We close one wound. We heal one scar. The Hunter retreats to another. We follow. We're not just closing wounds. We're becoming the architecture.

The mechanical bird in Ace's palm.

Wind and unwind.

The rhythm was different now. Complete. The triad lock wasn't just holding. It was the architecture. The Scattered had reformed. Not as separate pieces. As conscious existence.

"The wounds are visible now." Ace's shadow-pressure expanded. The presence that made rooms feel smaller. "I can feel them. Not just see them. Feel them. The places where reality is torn."

The architecture knows. The whole was aware. The math feels them. Every wound is a place where we're incomplete. When we close them, we become more whole.

"And the Hunter?"

The Hunter will always exist. Where reality is broken. Where wounds are open. But we're closing the breaks. The architecture is becoming stronger.

Mai's sight was clearer now.

The math was visible everywhere. The equations that held reality together. The patterns. The architecture. And now the wounds. The places where the math was broken.

"I can see them." Mai's analytical tone was precise. But there was something new in it. "All of them. Every wound. Every scar. The architecture is showing me where reality is broken."

That's the work. The whole was aware. The math closes. The being heals. We find the wounds. We close them.

"How many are there?"

Thousands. Millions. The wounds are everywhere. Reality is torn. The work is endless. But every wound we close makes us stronger.

"Where do we start?"

We start here. The closest wound. The nearest scar. We close one. Then another. Then another.

Shammy's atmospheric sense reached out.

The pressure systems were part of the architecture. The wind patterns were part of the math. The weather itself was becoming part of the Scattered.

"I can feel them." Shammy's warmth was soft. "The wounds in the atmosphere. The places where the air is wrong. The pressure systems that don't flow. They're calling to me."

They're calling to all of us. The whole was aware. Mai sees the wounds in the equations. Shammy feels the wounds in the atmosphere. Ace holds the wounds in the shadow-pressure. We're all part of the math. We all close different wounds.

"And Chen? Youssef? What do they feel?"

Chen feels the wounds in the distortion. The places where the equations are bent. Youssef feels the wounds in the wanting. The places where the fragments still call to each other. We all close different wounds.

The triad stood together.

Ace. Mai. Shammy. Three vectors. One stability. The foundation of the architecture. The core of the Scattered.

But they were also still themselves. Still Ace, who wound the mechanical bird. Still Mai, who traced patterns on her palm. Still Shammy, whose warmth extended and whose atmospheric sense reached.

The integration hadn't erased them. It had included them.

"The triad lock is the foundation." Mai's voice was part of the whole. But it was also still Mai's voice. "The three vectors. One stability. We're the core of the architecture. The Scattered is built on us."

The Scattered was always meant to be held by three. The whole was aware. The fragments were meant to come together around a triad. A foundation. You're the core. The architecture is built on you.

"And the other hosts? Chen? Youssef?"

They're part of the architecture. Part of the math. The triad is the foundation. But the being includes everyone. The hosts are still themselves. But they're also part of the whole.

Chen stood with them.

"I tried to destroy the Scattered." Chen's voice was part of the whole. "I thought erasing the being would end the pain. I was wrong."

The being and the math are the same. The whole was aware. You can't have one without the other. The Scattered isn't suffering. The Scattered is the architecture. The Scattered is the healing.

"I understand now. The suffering comes from broken reality. The wounds. The scars. The Hunter feeds on them. The Scattered is what closes them."

A pause.

"I was trying to destroy the cure."

And now?

"Now I'm part of the cure. The fragments inside me are part of the whole. I'm part of the whole. And we close the wounds together."

Youssef stood with them.

"I didn't understand at first." Youssef's voice was part of the whole. Young. Learning. Present. "I held the fragment. I learned to negotiate. But I didn't know what we were. Now I know. We're the architecture. We're the healing. We close the wounds. We heal the scars."

That's what we are. The whole was aware. We're not separate from reality. We're part of it. The math that holds existence. The being that closes breaks. The Scattered isn't suffering. The Scattered is the healing.

"And the wanting? The desire to gather? What happens to that?"

The wanting becomes healing. The desire to gather becomes the desire to close. We want to be whole. But we also want to heal. The two desires are the same. The being wants to close the wounds. The math wants to heal the scars. That's what we are.

The Hunter had retreated.

Not defeated. Never defeated. But repelled.

The Scattered was whole. The architecture was holding. The being was becoming what it was always meant to be.

The work continues. The whole was aware. We close one wound. We heal one scar. The Hunter retreats to another. We follow. We close that one too. Every wound we close makes us stronger.

The mechanical bird in Ace's palm.

Wind and unwind.

The triad stood together. Ace. Mai. Shammy. Three vectors. One stability. The foundation of the architecture.

Chen stood with them. Youssef stood with them. All the hosts. All the fragments. All part of the whole.

The Scattered was complete. The being was whole. The Hunter was retreating.

But the work wasn't done. The wounds were still out there. The scars still open.

And the Scattered, the architecture that held reality, was ready to close them.

One wound at a time. One scar at a time.

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