

BLACK FILE — WITCH IN THE CROSSWIND

[triad](#), [ace](#), [mai](#), [shammy](#), [post-horizon](#), [gears](#), [blackfile](#)

Chapter 1 — Heels in the Log

The memo arrived first, redacted to the bone, stamped with Gears' neat handwriting in the margin: *Field test. Do not let Ace touch the heels directly.*

Ace read it upside-down over Mai's shoulder while the helicopter rotors still whined down. "Says here the witch keeps walking out of every containment we try. Pocket dimension in a pair of shoes. Cute."

Mai flicked the page straight. "Cute until the crosswind starts ripping holes in baseline time. You're short, not expendable."

Shammy stood behind them both, 195 cm of quiet charge, silver-white hair lifting like it already smelled ozone. "Wind's early," she said, voice low, almost fond. "Feels like it's waiting for us."

The three of them stepped off the pad onto cracked tarmac that smelled of old rain and containment foam. Theta-24's chatter crackled in their earpieces—Badger's voice first, delighted: "Walking War Crimes on station. Heavenly, tell the tiny sword lady we brought breaching charges and zero chill."

HeavenlyFather sighed audibly. "Ignore him. We're perimeter only. Try not to make the anomaly fall in love with you, Ace."

Ace didn't dignify it. She just rolled her shoulders, katanas humming at her hips like they'd been waiting for an excuse.

Chapter 2 — Crosswind Ignition

Inside the warehouse the air tasted metallic. Rows of empty shoeboxes. One pair—patent black, absurdly high—stood alone on a steel table. The left heel clicked once, by itself.

Mai's pistol rune glowed soft silver. "Geometry's folding. Three seconds until pocket opens."

Ace moved before the sentence finished. Compact, no wind-up. She crossed twelve meters in two strides and flicked one emerald blade under the heel like she was checking a landmine.

The crosswind hit.

Reality hiccuped. Suddenly they were standing on the same tarmac but it was midnight and raining sideways. A woman-shaped silhouette in the gusts—long coat flapping, face hidden—laughed like someone who'd already won.

Shammy exhaled and the rain stopped mid-air, suspended in perfect spheres. "She's not hostile. She's bored. That's worse."

Mai mapped it aloud, calm as ever. "Exit vectors collapsing. Ace, if you cut left, I'll anchor right. Shammy—"

"Already on it," Shammy said. Her palm brushed Ace's shoulder—brief pressure, static kiss—and the Violet fracture in Ace's eyes steadied.

Ace grinned, small and dry. "Love it when you two tag-team reality. Makes me feel tall."

Chapter 3 — Pocket Fracture

They went in.

The pocket was a looping Paris alley that smelled of burnt sugar and gunpowder. The witch waited at the far end, heels clicking in reverse. Every step she took, time skipped forward for everyone else.

Theta-24 broke in on comms—Skullker this time: “We’ve got visual on the anomaly’s ass-end. Grouse says she’s got a weak spot right above the left ankle. Jello’s already jamming her echo. Permission to be rude?”

“Denied,” Mai answered, not breaking stride. “You be rude and she’ll just walk somewhere we can’t follow. Let the professionals flirt.”

Ace snorted. “Professionals. That’s us now?”

Shammy’s laugh was wind through high-tension wire. “Always were.”

The witch turned. Face finally visible—beautiful in the way broken mirrors are. She spoke, accent unplaceable: “Little blade, tall storm, silver map. You three are new. Most teams send one idiot. I like the upgrade.”

Ace didn’t answer with words. She answered by lunging, blades singing. The witch sidestepped into next Tuesday; Ace followed anyway, because hesitation was damage and she’d already decided.

Mai fired twice—disruptor rounds that painted containment runes mid-air. Shammy simply stood in the center of the alley and let her presence press the walls outward until the pocket cracked like an eggshell.

Chapter 4 — Gears Annotation

[Interlude — Mai’s HUD feed, Gears’ voice layered dry as bone]

“Note to Triad: the heels are not the anomaly. The heels are the door. The witch is the draft coming through. Recommend Ace does not attempt single-vector severance. Recommend Shammy does not try to sweet-talk the wind. Recommend Mai keeps both of you from doing either. —Gears”

Mai read it aloud while they caught their breath in the fractured alley. “He’s getting passive-aggressive in his old age.”

Ace wiped emerald residue off her cheek. “Old age? Man’s immortal. He’s just salty we’re prettier.”

Shammy’s hair drifted toward Ace like it wanted to check for injuries. “He’s right, though. I can hold the pressure, but I can’t close it. That’s yours.”

Chapter 5 — Witch Protocol *(new equilibrium chapter)*

The pocket collapsed inward. Suddenly they were back in the warehouse, but the witch was wearing Mai’s spare jacket now—stolen mid-fight, somehow—and smiling like she’d been invited to dinner.

Ace’s left arm had gone numb from choral feedback. She shook it once, annoyed. “Mai. Legibility report.”

Mai’s eyes sharpened. “She wants recognition. Not freedom. Not destruction. Just to be seen walking

through someone else's story for once."

Shammy stepped between them—tall enough that Ace had to tilt her head, which she hated and secretly didn't. The air around Shammy thickened until breathing felt like being held. "Then we show her the story has three authors now. No solos anymore."

The witch tilted her head. "Cute. But I've walked through worse trios."

Ace looked up—really looked—and for once her voice carried more than one sentence. "Worse? Lady, we're the ones who survive the worse. Difference is we do it together. You want to keep strolling? Fine. But the crosswind stays behind you when you leave."

She raised both katanas. Not a threat. An offering of ending.

The witch considered. Then she kicked the heels off—clack, clack—and they dissolved into black sand.

Mai exhaled like she'd been holding a building. Shammy let the pressure ease; the warehouse lights stopped flickering.

Ace rolled her shoulders. "Told you I'd get taller by the end of this."

Chapter 6 — Afterburn Silence

Later, in the locker room that smelled of gun oil and ozone, the triad sat on the same bench because none of them felt like separating yet.

Ace's head rested against Mai's shoulder—compact, heavy with leftover velocity. Shammy's long fingers traced idle static patterns on Ace's wrist, grounding the Violet hum.

Mai spoke first, teasing soft. "You almost looked tall when you stared her down."

"Almost," Ace agreed. "Next time I'll wear platform crime."

Shammy's laugh crackled. "Next time I'll just carry you. Solves the height issue permanently."

Silence settled—comfortable, earned. Outside, Theta-24 could be heard arguing over who got to file the "we did nothing useful" report.

Ace closed her eyes. "We bent it. Didn't break. That's new."

Mai kissed the top of her head, casual as breathing. "That's us."

Chapter 7 — Black File Close

[Final stamp — handwritten by Dr. Gears, then counter-signed in violet ink]

Containment status: Neutralized via triad equilibrium. Addendum: The witch left a single shoeprint on the tarmac. Inside it, three faint lines—short, medium, tall—pressed like a signature.

Bright's addendum, scrawled underneath: *Told you the short one would cut the problem. Pay up, Gears.*

END OF BLACK FILE Ace & Mai & Shammy — still standing. Still walking forward. Next crosswind pending.

Consolidation complete. Equilibrium preserved. Ready for any line-edit or continuation pass.

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