

ACE 35 — “Blind Transport”
Chapter 7 — Drift Corridor

The room did not collapse.

It lost priority.

That was the difference.

Nothing broke.

Nothing shattered.

Nothing escalated into violence.

But the space—

no longer decided first.

For the first time since they had entered—

the environment was reacting to them

instead of the other way around.

Ace moved.

No hesitation.

She stepped forward—

not toward the exit—

but through the shifting geometry that used to define the room.

The statue in her hands flickered again.

Not visibly.

But its position—

lagged.

For a fraction of a second—

it existed somewhere else.

Then snapped back.

“...window’s unstable,” she said.

Mai was already moving.

Not following.

Parallel.

Her path didn’t match Ace’s.

It intersected it—

at angles that made no sense

in a stable frame.

“Good,” she said.

“Keep it that way.”

Shammy followed last.

Not directly behind.

Offset.

Her breathing had broken completely now.

Three rhythms.

None aligned.

The air—

finally—

responded.

Not smoothly.

In bursts.

Micro-pressure spikes.

Tiny vacuums.

Currents that started and stopped without pattern.

"...it's losing the ability to smooth us," she said.

Mai didn't look back.

"That's what we want."

A beat.

“...until it isn’t.”

The first transition hit without warning.

Not a door.

Not a threshold.

A disagreement.

Ace stepped—

and the floor was not where it had been.

Not gone.

Not missing.

Just—

reinterpreted.

Her balance shifted.

Micro-adjustment.

Instant recovery.

The statue in her hands—

lagged behind her movement—

then snapped forward—
closer than before.

Ace didn't react.

Didn't give it anything.

"...don't acknowledge it," Mai said immediately.

Ace's voice stayed flat.

"...wasn't going to."

Behind them—

something changed.

Shammy felt it first.

Not visually.

Pressure.

A drop.

Sudden.

Localized.

“...stop,” she said.

Ace didn’t.

Mai did.

Half-step.

Pause.

Recalculate.

“...what.”

Shammy didn’t answer immediately.

Her eyes moved—

not across the room—

through it.

“...one’s not here,” she said.

Silence.

Ace didn’t turn.

Didn't look back.

"...count," she said.

Mai didn't answer.

She didn't trust it anymore.

"...positions," she said instead.

Shammy swallowed.

Forced alignment.

Tried to reconstruct.

One.

Two.

Gap.

Three.

Her voice dropped.

"...I can't hold all of them."

The words landed heavier than anything so far.

Not failure.

Limit.

Mai moved.

Sharp.

She stepped across the geometry—
breaking her own frame—
forcing a new one.

“Don’t try to hold,” she said.

“Let it drop.”

Ace’s voice cut in.

“...you sure.”

Mai didn’t hesitate.

“Yes.”

A beat.

“If we try to stabilize, we lose all of them.”

Silence.

Then—

Ace moved again.

Forward.

Faster now.

Not reckless—

but committed.

The statue in her hands flickered—

lagged—

snapped—

its head now—

closer to her shoulder.

Too close.

But Ace didn't look.

Didn't acknowledge.

Didn't give it existence beyond weight and position.

"...it's pushing," Shammy said.

Mai corrected immediately.

"No."

A beat.

"It's being placed."

The corridor—

if it could still be called that—

warped.

Not visually.

Relationally.

Distances no longer matched movement.

Angles no longer matched direction.

And somewhere—

behind them—

something resolved.

Shammy's breath hitched.

"...it's back," she said.

Ace didn't slow.

"...good."

"Not good," Shammy said.

A beat.

"It's closer."

Mai didn't look.

Didn't turn.

“...everything is.”

The second failure wasn't quiet.

It wasn't loud either.

It was—
present.

For a fraction of a second—

all three of them
aligned.

Perfectly.

Same angle.

Same frame.

Same understanding.

And in that instant—

the system snapped back.

Hard.

The room resolved.

Clean.

Stable.

Correct.

And all four statues—

were exactly where they should be.

On pedestals.

At the center.

Watching.

Silence.

Total.

Ace didn't blink.

Mai didn't breathe.

Shammy didn't move.

"...that's the reset," Mai said quietly.

A beat.

"...that's what it's trying to force."

Ace's voice was lower now.

"...then we don't let it."

The room held.

Waiting.

Perfect.

Wrong.

Shammy exhaled.

Slow.

Careful.

“...we can’t brute force this,” she said.

Mai nodded once.

“No.”

A beat.

“We have to break it faster than it can fix us.”

Ace adjusted her stance.

The statue in front of her—

did not move.

Did not shift.

Did not exist—

beyond what they allowed.

Her voice dropped.

“...then we stop giving it time.”

Silence.

Then—

they moved.

Not in sequence.

Not in sync.

Not even in agreement.

Three directions.

Three frames.

Three different truths—

colliding—

before the system could resolve them.

And this time—

when the room tried to snap back—

it didn't quite make it.

The pedestals flickered.

One—

failed to appear.

Just—

gone.

For a fraction—

there were only three.

Then four again.

Then—

not quite.

Mai's voice cut through.

"...now."

Ace didn't hesitate.

She stepped—
through the space where one should have been—

and this time—

the system was too slow
to stop her.

Behind her—

something shifted
without being seen.

Shammy's voice dropped to a whisper.

"...we're outrunning it."

Mai didn't answer.

Because she already knew—

they weren't.

They were just—

making it harder

for the system

to decide

what had already happened.

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