

In this chapter, the narrator expresses his anxiety about visiting Marshall, the supreme commander of their mission. Reflecting on their history, the narrator recalls his arrival at the orbital assembly plant for the \*Drakkar\*. His first impression of Marshall is muddled, as he was terrified during his initial experience with zero gravity involving unexpected free fall. Despite his fear, he maintained his composure when he first encountered Marshall, who displayed an intimidating presence.

Marshall introduces himself in the lounge by welcoming the new colonists and making sardonic remarks, assessing their prior space travel experience. As one of the colonists, Dugan, expresses concerns about personal effects not being transferred, Marshall reveals their decision to prohibit personal items due to weight constraints, causing discontent among the group.

The narrator, Mickey Barnes, tries to contest this in a futile exchange with Marshall regarding their luggage allowance. Marshall explains the physics of the mission and highlights the serious constraints on mass, including the unconventional choice of transporting colonists as frozen embryos to limit weight.

Marshall further questions Mickey about his role on the mission, leading Mickey to make a flippant remark about being “Expendable,” which Marshall does not take lightly, revealing his disapproval. He promptly instructs Mickey to find a sling for sleeping as the station isn’t equipped to provide individual quarters, leaving him unsettled.

As the chapter unfolds, Mickey converses with Dugan and Bree, a fellow colonist, who explains that Marshall adheres to Natalist beliefs that oppose the concept of backups for human beings. According to this religion, once an original body dies, so too does the soul, thus seeing bio-printed individuals as soulless.

This revelation leaves Mickey feeling uneasy, especially being labeled the “Expendable”—someone whose life holds less value. Dugan offers a light-hearted perspective, suggesting that as long as Mickey remains alive in his current body, he is still acceptable in Marshall’s eyes. The chapter closes with Mickey acknowledging this advice, understanding its importance as he navigates his precarious situation.