

015

In this chapter, the characters Seven and Eight navigate the challenges of rationing during a time of extreme hunger and tension. Eight expresses his frustration about the drastic cuts to their food supply, reflecting on his struggles since waking from a tank. Despite his despair, Seven remains pragmatic, attempting to manage their dwindling rations while showing empathy towards Eight's state. Their conversation reveals Eight's desperation, humor, and the kinship that develops from shared hardship, even as he jokingly threatens to consume Seven in a moment of hunger-induced madness.

Amidst the comedy and tension, Seven receives a ping from Black Hornet, a fellow crew member, who announces a change in flying duties and expresses a desire to meet up. Eight insists that Seven should go, needing a break from their dire situation. As Seven leaves, the narrative shifts to a reflection on the historical challenges of starvation faced during the first colonization efforts. The tale of the *Ching Shih*, a ship that suffered a failed mission decades ago, parallels the current existential struggles, detailing the slow death of its crew as they were trapped in space facing resource depletion.

The scene shifts as Seven seeks refuge in the small, inhospitable dome lacking common leisure spaces, finally settling in the cafeteria. Amid the emptiness, he encounters Highsmith, a history enthusiast. Rather than engaging, Seven retreats into his thoughts and considers the grim fate of the past colonists, drawing a painful connection to their current predicament.

Resolved to alleviate Eight's suffering, he decides to act. He activates a communication with Mickey8, confirming where they are and calculating their timeline. As tension builds, he knows he needs to avoid confrontation over his hunger with his friends. Ultimately, he makes his way to the gym, a space dedicated to physical fitness but devoid of occupants during the famine, only to unexpectedly find Cat there, which leads to an honest conversation about grief, loss, and survival.

Cat shares her own pain over a bunkmate lost in the recent sortie, illustrating the emotional and psychological strain on the crew. Their developing camaraderie brings Seven comfort, as he reflects on his own relational turmoil with Nasha, suggesting every character is grappling with their personal demons amid the broader crisis of survival. The chapter concludes with a hint of potential connection as Cat offers a space to Seven, acknowledging their shared isolation.