

# 016

In this chapter, Cat wakes up the narrator, who is disoriented from sleeping in Cat's bed, a decision that stemmed from a desire to avoid the memory of a recently deceased roommate. Their sleeping arrangement was not intimate, but rather a comfort from the emotional turmoil surrounding their circumstances, particularly concerning Nasha and Eight. Cat asks if the narrator has plans for the day, and upon realizing he has a day off, he contemplates how to spend it.

Cat reveals she only has a half shift due to near-misses she experienced at work in Security. The atmosphere is relaxed but informal, with their shabby clothing reflecting their living conditions. Cat's proposal for breakfast leads to playful banter about sharing food before they make their way through the mostly empty halls. The narrator acknowledges the isolation felt since their arrival in this new place, both due to his status as an Expendable and the lingering scent of sweat. A stop at the chem shower highlights the scarcity of luxuries, such as hot water.

When they reach the main cafeteria, it is sparsely populated. The narrator realizes he is short on calories, likely due to Eight's hefty breakfast. Cat orders a yam-tomato scramble, leaving the narrator to sip on cyclor paste, a rather unappetizing meal. Their conversation reveals tension between their experiences; while Cat enjoys food, the narrator struggles with limited rations. As they engage in lighthearted conversation, Cat inquires about the narrator's past, suggesting speculation around his criminal history. He assures her he's not a criminal, dispelling any concerns she might have.

Post-breakfast, Cat thanks the narrator for their camaraderie the previous night and hints at wanting to spend more time together, suggesting plans for later. The narrator reflects on observations of Expendables and the ethical dilemmas surrounding their roles. As he prepares for a quiet day, plans are disrupted when a colleague calls him back to work for a new tomato experiment, hinting at the stressful pressures that await him.

The chapter concludes with Eight returning from his duty, discussing the poor state of the crops while the narrator internally debates the precarious dynamics evolving within their group.