

# 018

In this chapter, the protagonist grapples with the implications of being a "multiple," an unfortunate circumstance that complicates his already precarious position within the colony. As he tries to evade confrontation with Cat, who has become suspicious due to their past interactions, she initiates contact late at night. Despite his reluctance, he acknowledges the necessity of meeting her, leading to an awkward exchange at the gym, a place deemed discreet enough for a serious conversation.

During their meeting, Cat reveals her awareness of his unusual situation — that there are two versions of him, both existing simultaneously. This revelation unsettles him, especially when she indicates a serious concern for his safety, hinting at the legal ramifications tied to his condition. Their conversation turns philosophical when Cat questions whether he considers himself the same person since boarding the shuttle from Midgard. The protagonist reflects on his past identity and experiences, ultimately expressing uncertainty about his current existence versus his previous self.

Their dialogue shifts toward mortality and the risks associated with their lives on the colony, with Cat confessing that mortality has been weighing heavily on her thoughts. Their connection deepens, yet it is overshadowed by the gravity of the situation. The chapter concludes with a tempestuous return to his quarters, where he finds Eight and Nasha together in bed, sparking confusion, jealousy, and the threat of a confrontation over established boundaries. The playful banter about their relationships provides relief from the tension but quickly fades when Cat unexpectedly interrupts, creating a panic as the triad attempts to cover up their unorthodox arrangement. As security forces break into the room, it becomes clear that the precarious balance of their relationships and safety hangs in the balance.

This chapter encapsulates the tension and uncertainty inherent in the protagonist's dual existence and the fraught dynamics with Cat, Eight, and Nasha, enveloping the reader in a tumultuous emotional landscape.