

The chapter begins with the narrator, Mickey, feeling an overwhelming sense of anxiety and dread about the process he is about to undergo. His companion, Nasha, is understandably freaked out as this is a new and terrifying experience for her; however, for Mickey, facing execution has become somewhat routine. He reflects on the challenges faced by their colony ship once it arrives at its destination, Niflheim, noting the difficulties of survival due to the planet's hostile climate and atmosphere. The crew had to implement engineering solutions, like introducing algae, to eventually make the planet habitable.

The menial jobs begin with testing the local microbiota, a necessity for ensuring human safety. As the testing commences, Mickey is entered into an isolation chamber where he is subjected to various potential pathogens, a procedure that induces a psychological and physical struggle as he rapidly succumbs to the effects of the unknown microbes. Nasha stays nearby, supporting Mickey emotionally through the ordeal, but eventually, he collapses and begins to experience severe symptoms of illness.

Mickey undergoes a gruesome death process, resulting in a profound fulfillment of fear and hopelessness. However, he wakes up covered in goo, next to the portable tank utilized during the testing. After a brief period of recovery in medical care, it becomes evident that Mickey must undergo further trials, indicated by a series of painful inoculations aimed at prepping him for round two in the isolation chamber. His relationship with Nasha is deepened during this time, as they share intimate moments and support each other through the uncertainty of what lies ahead.

After a week passes, Mickey enters the chamber again prepared for a new round of testing. This time, however, the outcome looks hopeful at first, as he feels perfectly fine even after days of isolation. Yet, a startling discovery soon arises when Mickey is advised he must undergo another examination after discovering an ominous growth in his brain. What follows is a harrowing experience as he confronts the implications of having his brain eaten by parasitic worms, leading to severe neurological degradation.

The passage concludes with a reflection on the grim and brutal trials he's faced, posing questions about the nature of his existence and the next steps Marshall has planned for him, with an unsettling sense that despite his experiences, a new dread is creeping in.