

Mickey 7

Mickey 7 by Edward Ashton follows Mickey, a disposable worker on a colonization mission to a distant planet. After his seventh death, he's replaced, but his new body retains his memories, leading to a struggle for survival and identity as he uncovers dark secrets about the mission.

Mickey 7 Chapter 12 Summary – Free Book Summary PDF, Audio Download

Mickey3 reflects on his experience as the third iteration of himself after two previous bodies died in traumatic circumstances. The emotional weight of losing his original body is felt deeply, with the memory haunting him as he initially riddles his time with fear and expectations of disaster. Over months that turn into a year of mundane existence, Mickey finds comfort in exploring the histories of failed colonies, finding that the narrative he learned in school painted an overly optimistic view of humanity's expansion across the universe.

He learns that colony ships often undertake perilous journeys into the unknown without sufficient information about their targets. The story of a failed colony from Asher's World resonates painfully with him; the colonists arrived only to discover that their ideal target was inhospitable due to unforeseen environmental conditions. This reading triggers reflections on his own past and tragedies.

Mickey eventually interacts with fellow crew member Nasha after the traumatic events that led to his recent existence. They meet in the carousel, a centrifugal area designed to maintain physical fitness in microgravity, albeit with Mickey more focused on reading. Nasha interrupts his thoughts on past colony failures with playful banter, revealing her own life experiences that shaped her journey towards becoming a combat pilot.

As their relationship develops, Mickey learns about Nasha's immigrant background and her determination to join the mission. They bond over their hopes for their destination, exchanging lighthearted remarks amidst serious themes of survival and potential disaster. When the ship finally approaches Niflheim for orbital insertion, anticipation fills the air, but instead of seeing lush landscapes, they are met with a stark white planet, revealing a frozen world rather than the welcoming haven they imagined.

Mickey tries to instill hope in Nasha about their potential future, drawing parallels to Earth's ancient environments, while uncertainty looms with a sudden command for immediate deployment arises, leaving the prospect of survival and the next steps unclear.

Also by Edward Ashton

The provided text comprises a brief frontmatter section highlighting other works by the author Edward Ashton. It includes links and titles of two books: "Three Days in April" and "The End of Ordinary." There are no narrative elements or substantial content to summarize. The section is structured with the author's name emphasized, and it is formatted for an eBook presentation.

If there is a specific chapter from a book you'd like me to summarize, please provide that text, and I will follow your instructions accordingly.

Antimatter, a fascinating concept, behaves like regular matter unless it encounters normal matter, leading to catastrophic reactions. This interaction can yield anything from harmful gamma rays to a swift release of high-speed subatomic particles, emphasizing the need for living organisms to steer clear of it. Antimatter's breakthrough came on old Earth prior to the Diaspora, wherein its synthesis and containment paved the way for advancements in interstellar travel, integral for missions like the Diaspora that aimed to escape dire conditions back home, specifically the Bubble War.

History reflects that each new technology is typically first exploited for vanity and warfare, and antimatter was notably engineered for destructive purposes. The introduction of the magnetic monopole bubble made it possible to safely store and detonate antimatter, producing remarkably lethal yet clean "bubble bombs." These devices could annihilate populations without leaving behind radioactive residues, thus enabling invaders to occupy strategically advantageous territories with minimal fallout—effectively presenting a terrifying weapon of choice in warfare.

During a profound environmental crisis on old Earth, characterized by overpopulation and resource scarcity, the introduction of bubble bombs exacerbated tensions among nearly two hundred competing political entities. The subsequent Bubble War erupted and ended within a mere three weeks, depleting the planet's antimatter supply and resulting in the deaths of over half of the global population. The aftermath prompted the launch of the ****Ching Shih****, indicating a desperate bid for survival and a move away from humanity's violent tendencies.

Despite the exodus into the Diaspora, a prevailing fear lingered: the potential resurgence of antimatter weaponry. To counter this anxiety, the Union established a clear, unwavering rule against the use of antimatter, believing themselves distinct from their predecessors on old Earth. However, the reality remains that the Union is not inherently different; conflicts still arise, albeit without the catastrophic weaponry of the past. Breaking the antimatter rule would incur dire consequences, solidifying the gravity of adhering to this principle among the worlds within the Union.

006

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.

020

In this chapter, the dynamics of power and fear are portrayed as characters—Mickey, Nasha, and Eight—are marched down a corridor by two goons. As they descend the central stairs, tension builds; Nasha challenges their captors about the legality of their actions, which leads to a hostile exchange where the bigger goon dismisses her threats. Instead of being taken to a cycler or a dungeon, they find themselves in a Security ready room filled with weapons and snacks, an odd setting for prisoners. The goons leave them, warning them to stay away from the equipment, provoking Nasha to attempt accessing a locker unsuccessfully.

Amid the precarious situation, the trio contemplates their predicament. Nasha jests about their possible demise while Eight reassures her that as a crucial atmospheric pilot, she is not in immediate danger. The camaraderie among them reveals their shared anxiety and fatalism; Mickey reflects on the immutability of their situation—they are trapped in a dome that feels more like a cold jail than a safe haven on a harsh planet called Niflheim. Nasha's attempt to joke about her fate reveals underlying tension, as they all realize the precariousness of their lives.

As time passes, a new goon named Lucas appears, revealing to Mickey and Eight the gravity of their situation—Marshall, the authority figure, is upset about the emergence of two versions of Mickey. This eventually leads to a confrontation in Marshall's office, where Marshall's anger is palpable. He accuses them of theft and misjudgment regarding their existence as multiples. The chapter escalates as Marshall declares that both of them must go into the cycler, while also casting suspicion on Nasha's involvement.

The narrative culminates with Marshall's ominous claim that their shared life might cost them their existence, marking a significant turning point in their struggle for survival. The characters confront the reality of their situation—a possible and disturbing end, intertwined with the notion of identity and what it means to be human in a brutal environment. Mickey's reflection about the cyclical nature of their lives encapsulates the existential dread hanging over them, leading to uncertain fates ahead.

011

The chapter opens with Berto, the pilot, reflecting on the chaotic events of a recent sortie where three people died, eliciting a cold reaction from Cat, who is visibly affected. Tension fills the cockpit as Cat confronts Berto about his failure to warn them about the presence of deadly creepers, which ultimately led to the mission’s grim outcome. Berto, seemingly embarrassed, apologizes but tries to justify his actions, leading to a heated exchange with Cat.

After the landing, Cat and the narrator confront Marshall, their superior, regarding the incident. Marshall is incensed, pressing them to explain why they prioritized their survival over helping Mr. Dugan when they were supposed to retrieve a creeper. The narrator attempts to articulate their reasoning, citing the mission's objectives and their judgment at the moment. Marshall, unimpressed, continues to scrutinize the duo, delivering harsh threats and emphasizing the significance of their actions given the dwindling colony

population.

Frustration lingers post-briefing as Cat and the narrator digest their grim day over a meal. The cafeteria is filled with a tense air as survivors grapple with their losses. Cat expresses her disdain for Marshall's insinuation that her judgment could be clouded by personal feelings towards the narrator, asserting her professionalism. During their meal, Cat and the narrator joke, though the weight of recent events hangs heavy.

After the meal, the narrator shares tender moments with Nasha, exploring their complex relationships grounded in humor and past threats from their superior. In a heavy yet light-hearted manner, they dissect the bizarre nature of their colony's recent losses, voicing concerns over the mysterious creepers that managed to breach defenses without detection.

The chapter closes with the narrator haunted by unsettling dreams and visions from Midgard, revealing a troubled psyche amidst a dangerous reality. Overwhelmed by feelings of disorientation and fear, they confront the trauma of their existence and the uncertainties surrounding their survival in the unforgiving environment of the colony.

026

In this chapter, the protagonist wakes up to find that Nasha has left a message, indicating she has to leave for the day. This news brings a smile to their face as they experience an unfamiliar feeling of lightness and freedom from fear. However, this sense of calm is interrupted by a command from Marshall, requiring them to report to his office immediately.

Upon entering Marshall's office, the protagonist is surprised by Marshall's unexpected demeanor, which is more relaxed than anticipated. The conversation begins with Marshall offering an apology for misjudging the situation regarding the device the protagonist had relinquished to some creatures. Despite having anticipated a reprimand, the protagonist finds themselves in an unusual position of accepting Marshall's apology. The discussion soon shifts to the pressing issue of fuel for their colony, as half of their antimatter supply has been lost.

Marshall explains that the device brought back contains critical fuel that needs to be reinserted into the colony's core. The task is daunting and dangerous, requiring manual intervention due to the way it was extracted. Upon hearing this, the protagonist's concerns grow, recalling the dangers associated with the antimatter core. However, when Marshall expresses admiration for their previous saving of the colony, all genuine feelings quickly dissolve into frustration and anger.

In a bold move, the protagonist refuses to comply with Marshall's order to handle the fuel situation. They resign as the colony's Expendable and threaten to disrupt the newfound peace with the creatures if Marshall attempts to harm them. Marshall's temper flares after this assertion, but instead of fear, the protagonist feels liberated from the weight of their previous roles and expectations. Mocking Marshall's authority, they assert their power over the situation.

After this confrontation, the scene shifts to a casual dining moment with Berto, where awkward silence prevails. Berto acknowledges the protagonist's resignation, and despite their earlier tension, the protagonist reestablishes ground by playfully punching Berto. This act fosters a new dynamic in their relationship, and with the chapter closing on a now-defiant stance, the protagonist recognizes this as the beginning of a fresh chapter in their life.

023

In this chapter, Mickey and Berto are engaged in a critical mission in a desolate environment, facing their fears and the consequences of past actions. As they hover over a crevasse, Mickey questions Berto about Six, who was taken by the creepers. Berto reveals he had lied initially, clarifying that the creepers didn't eat Six but dissected him, leaving a lingering sense of betrayal for Mickey. Berto confesses to his fear of the creepers, providing insight into why he didn't act to save Mickey during earlier events.

As they descend into the crevasse, Mickey grapples with the moral implications of their mission. Equipped with destructive weapons—bubble bombs made from antimatter—he feels uneasy about using them against sentient creatures. Despite Eight's insistence that they proceed to avoid dire consequences from their command, Mickey recalls a previous encounter where a creeper saved him, complicating his emotional response to their mission.

Once separated, Mickey finds himself navigating through dark tunnels, anticipating danger from the creepers that seem aware of their presence. He soon views an expansive cavern swarming with hundreds of creepers, realizing the potential risk they pose. The atmosphere shifts drastically when communication from Eight ceases; an unsettling void replaces their conversation, culminating in the grim confirmation that Eight is dead.

In a moment charged with tension, Mickey faces a decision: to pull the trigger on his weapons or to explore an alternate path. He experiences a surreal shift as a giant creeper confronts him, demanding to know if he is "Prime." Instead of succumbing to fear and violence, Mickey, in a moment of defiance and hope, claims to be Prime, drawing an unexpected connection with the creature. This leap of faith signifies a potential for communication and understanding, setting the stage for a pivotal encounter between Mickey and the very beings they had intended to destroy.

001

In this opening chapter, the protagonist, Mickey, finds himself in darkness on a cold stone floor, questioning how he ended up there. His last memories are fragmented, recalling instances of being dropped off at a crevasse and his distracted fall into a hole while observing a rock formation that amused him, which he likens to a monkey's head. The fall has left him injured—his left wrist is swollen and painful. Mickey checks for a signal and manages to contact Berto, who confirms his precarious predicament, acknowledging he saw Mickey's misstep but refuses to risk a rescue since Mickey is classified as an Expendable—a program designed to replace workers when they die.

As the conversation unfolds, Mickey and Berto exchange banter about the absurdity of his situation. Mickey is clearly frustrated that no one will come for him, but he also acknowledges the realities of his role. His thoughts drift to the cold and the likelihood of freezing to death, a fate he has pondered throughout his time on this inhospitable planet. The narrative is infused with a blend of humor and somber introspection as Mickey reflects on his life, the concept of dying, and the nature of identity.

Suddenly, Nasha—a character connected to Mickey—contacts him, revealing that she is en route to attempt a rescue. Her willingness to help ignites hope in Mickey, who nevertheless understands the risks involved. As their conversation continues, Mickey ultimately decides to dissuade Nasha from coming for him, recognizing that he is too deep underground to be effectively retrieved and that her safety matters more than his own predicament.

With a heavy heart, Mickey concludes that he will not survive this fall and prepares for his eventual fate, contemplating freezing to death as a method of exit. However, his resolve wavers as he senses hope in Nasha's determination. The chapter ends on an unresolved note, with Mickey grappling with the emotional weight of his potential death and the impact it may have on those he cares about, notably Nasha, whose

presence provided a glimmer of hope amid his dire situation.

019

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.

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.

024

In the vast Union, there exists a unique dwarf planet known as Long Shot, characterized by its unusual coexistence of humans and native sentient beings. This remote world orbits a gas giant and is situated nearly twenty lights away from the nearest colony around an M-class star. Long Shot's name derives from the remarkable journey that brought humans there, marking it as the longest successful jump ever achieved by humankind.

The native inhabitants of Long Shot are tree-dwelling cephalopods, observed leaping gracefully among the branches and skillfully changing their colors to blend with the lush canopy, often only visible in infrared spectra. These beings are concentrated in the central highlands of the planet's sole continent. Despite their scientific and cultural sophistication at the time of human arrival, they lacked material development comparable to that of pre-agricultural humans. This disparity has led to much speculation, with one theory suggesting humans progressed technologically out of necessity, as they struggled in their natural conditions.

In stark contrast, the natives of Long Shot excelled at adapting to their environment without the need for advanced tools like rifles. Upon human landing, the aliens were initially oblivious to the colonists because the beachhead was far from their mountainous habitats. Likewise, the settlers remained unaware of the natives due to their elusive and localized nature. For the first twenty years after colonization, there was no interaction between the two species, allowing both to continue their lives undisturbed.

Histories of the encounter between these two intelligent species lack profound insights into why their relationship developed so uniquely compared to other colonization attempts. One theory posits that the level of fear held by the colonists diminished over time, fostering a more open environment for interaction. Thus, the passage of time emerges as a crucial element in the dynamics of this unprecedented coexistence on Long Shot, suggesting that with patience and continued presence, understanding and respect could evolve.

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.

021

In this chapter, the narrative unfolds with EIGHT expressing surprise upon the protagonist's entrance, pondering what could possibly change Marshall's attitude toward them. The protagonist reveals that Marshall is presently preoccupied with threats from creepers rather than concerns about them, hinting at a strategic shift. EIGHT seems to have an unsettling realization about their precarious position—being vastly outnumbered with only 176 members remaining, as they prepare for a potential ground war against the technologically advanced creepers.

As the conversation deepens, thoughts turn to recollections of past deaths among their group, especially regarding SIX, highlighting the murky history and betrayal regarding Berto's actions. The protagonist, grappling with fears and uncertainties, also contemplates the implications of a chat message appearing as gibberish, leading to questions about connectivity issues in their shared consciousness with EIGHT. This foreshadows potential complications or glitches in their system.

The discourse transitions to thoughts about the larger context of colonization efforts, juxtaposing failures with rare successes like Bergen's World, which was initially inhospitable but transformed for habitation. This backdrop underscores a historical pattern of survival despite overwhelming odds.

As the tension rises, they are summoned by a new goon, Tonio, evoking memories of past violence—specifically the tasing incident. The ominous presence of Marshall signals an impending confrontation regarding their fate in light of the colony's shifting dynamics. Marshall's inquiry foreshadows the ultimate test of their roles, revealing that rather than a mere reassignment, their existence hangs in the balance with death as a tangible consequence. EIGHT's defiance contrasts sharply with Marshall's calculated demeanor, indicating an impending moral and personal conflict wherein duty clashes with survival instincts.

With Marshall's demand for a mission, the stakes are raised, suggesting that the participants are still pawns in a much larger game, with their very lives contingent on fulfilling expectations that may lead them closer to danger rather than safety.

027

In the chapter, the narrative unfolds about the unexpected arrival of spring on Niflheim, approximately a year after the colonists' arrival. As temperatures rise, snow melts, revealing exposed soil that quickly becomes covered with lichen, hinting at potential agricultural growth. The reason behind this seasonal change remains unclear; mission planners had anticipated a stable climate due to Niflheim's nearly circular orbit and negligible axial tilt. However, upon investigation, it turns out they ignored a previously documented periodic variation in stellar output attributed to the sun's marginally variable nature.

At first, the colonists delight in the change, but concerns arise regarding potential extreme weather fluctuations. Fortunately, conditions stabilize to a comfortable climate, promoting agricultural testing outside the habitation dome. Amidst this positive shift, the protagonist, Mickey, decides to explore outside with Nasha, although they still need rebreathers due to low oxygen levels. Their journey leads them to reminisce about Midgard's arid desert and potential life rapidly responding to rare precipitation, drawing a parallel with Niflheim's budding biosphere, where new plants and creatures emerge.

As they venture away from the dome, Mickey reveals his secret intent—checking on something important near the creeper-infested area. After navigating the landscape, they uncover an entrance to an underground tunnel, where Mickey retrieves a concealed bomb that was once left buried there. There's tension as Nasha questions the nature of the bomb and why Mickey kept it hidden from their superiors, particularly Marshall, who would have deemed it a threat.

Mickey explains his reasoning for leaving it with the creepers as a protective measure against potential use against their colony. After securing the bomb again, they ponder the implications of its hidden existence, acknowledging the risks involved. With no immediate plan for the future or contingencies should Marshall remain alive, Nasha expresses her concerns about their precarious situation. The chapter concludes with the couple deciding to return to the dome, leaving the explosive secret behind as a significant yet unresolved concern.

005

In this chapter, the protagonist, who is identified as Seven, faces the daunting prospect of using the cycler, an unsettling device that disassembles organic matter. Seven is apprehensive about being shoved face-first into the hole, which he feels is significantly worse than facing danger in the past. His companion, Eight, expresses concern and actively prevents him from making a hasty decision. Despite this, the fear of their situation—being multiple identities with limited resources—looms large. They contemplate their predicament, emphasizing their single registered identity and the risk of exposure threatening both of their lives.

As tensions rise, they discuss their meager rations, hoping to stretch their food supply. Eight suggests creatively managing their food by consuming cheaper paste, though Seven is unwilling to settle for such a drastic measure. They also consider Berto, a mutual acquaintance, as a potential ally for more resources but quickly realize he may not be trustworthy. Both friends recognize their lack of options and the possibility of facing severe consequences from Commander Marshall for their unconventional existence as multiples.

The conversation reveals insights into their relationships with others in the colony, with additional mention of the gravity of their situation laid bare when news comes of a missing colonist, Gabe Torricelli. Seven recalls seeing Gabe prior and considers whether the creatures they encountered are now a threat to their safety. This stark reality heightens the urgency of their need for a solid plan to survive—not just the impending hardships, but the scrutiny of the Commander, who is likely to be enraged that his colony is losing members.

As the chapter concludes, Seven is summoned to speak with Commander Marshall, indicating escalating tensions within their community. The interactions shed light on the characters' dynamics, fear, and resourcefulness amidst desperation and uncertainty in a harsh environment, exploring themes of trust, identity, and survival.

008

The chapter begins with the protagonist, Mickey, detailing his diverse roles aboard Himmel Station, where he is not fixed to one particular section but assigned various tasks as needed. He recounts experiences ranging from tending rabbit hutches to standing guard for Security. However, the pivotal moments occur when Command directly summons him, signaling a need for his specific skills.

Mickey reflects on his early days aboard Himmel Station, recalling his initial struggles with navigating the zero-gravity environment. He vividly remembers an encounter with Jemma, a tall, hairless woman in a gray jumpsuit, who introduces herself as his supervisor. Her teaching style contrasts sharply with his initial apprehension towards his complicated duties. Over time, Jemma becomes a significant figure in his training, balancing technical instruction with philosophical discourse.

Their discussions often revolve around complex scientific concepts and philosophies, like the Ship of Theseus, which Jemma uses as a metaphor for transformation and identity. Jemma emphasizes the importance of understanding the mission and one's own expendability in the harsh realities of space. Mickey feels more at ease with the philosophical discussions, although they often trigger deeper reflections on life, identity, and the notion of self.

As training progresses, Mickey learns about various systems aboard the ship and gains practical experience, like handling a linear accelerator and preparing for activities outside the station. Their relationship evolves amidst intense training and personal revelations about the nature of risk and exploration.

The emotional core of the chapter peaks during Mickey's final training day, culminating in an unsettling graduation ceremony that starkly contrasts any celebratory notions. Instead of a traditional celebration, Jemma presents Mickey with a burner gun, marking a grim initiation into his role as an Expendable. This moment forces Mickey to confront the reality of his choices and the implications of immortality, ultimately leading to a moment of impactful decision-making that defines his identity as "Mickey1." The combination of humor and philosophical reflection with tension encapsulates the complexities of existence in their precarious environment .

013

In the early hours after a disturbing dream, the protagonist, who is sharing a bed with Eight, finds it impossible to return to sleep. Frustrated, he decides to head to the cafeteria for some reading. There, he encounters the emptiness of the corridors, which align with his craving for food he cannot afford due to zeroed-out rations. As he browses through archives, he stumbles across a file on New Hope, revealing a complex history of a colony that had collapsed after a brutal civil war decades ago over whether a native bird species was sentient or merely a food source. This revelation stirs thoughts on the fragility of societal constructs and the ease with which descent into chaos can occur.

As Eight and Cat contact him via message regarding duty shifts, the tension of their recent activities looms in the background. Cat expresses frustration about their security roles, lamenting the inhospitable conditions of their planet, Niflheim. The protagonist dismisses her worries about armor suggesting their situation could be worse, while Cat struggles with the nature of their dangerous duties, hinting at a deeper examination of

personal survival instincts.

Later, while on patrol, the duo engages with a creature known as a creeper. Cat kills one, but the situation escalates when they perceive more approaching. Amidst the chaos, the protagonist experiences a seizure-like event, flashing between consciousness and blurry visions of humans, further complicating his grasp on reality.

After regaining consciousness in a medical facility, the protagonist learns from Cat that they survived a potentially deadly encounter only due to pylons and Cat's quick actions. The medical technician, Burke, expresses concerns over the protagonist's physical state, although there's no visible trauma, making it uncertain why the protagonist blacked out. Despite cautioning him about his ocular implant—a technology interfacing directly with his brain—Burke cannot offer immediate help.

As the protagonist contemplates his experiences and the implications for their mission on Niflheim, he receives messages about dinner plans, indicating a dynamic between him and Eight. This reflects the concern of maintaining normalcy amid the backdrop of perilous survival. The chapter closes as interpersonal conflicts about sharing resources emerge, foreshadowing how personal relationships will influence their survival in this harsh environment.

017

The chapter discusses the controversial figure of Alan Manikova and his dark legacy regarding the creation of "multiples," which are cloned versions of individuals. Initially, the concept of creating multiples seems beneficial, especially for dangerous tasks. However, a historical context is provided, highlighting the emergence of "Expendables" and the flawed technology of past bio-printers. When the bio-printer was first developed, it produced only basic, less aware entities, which could not replicate proper human functions, frequently leading to tragic outcomes for families who attempted to revive deceased infants.

Alan Manikova, born into a wealthy political family, was a brilliant but sociopathic mind. Following his parents' mysterious deaths, he inherited vast wealth and established Universal Eternity, Inc., where he pursued replication technology. After successfully demonstrating the ability to duplicate a human mind, he abruptly liquidated his company and embarked on an interstellar journey to the colony of Gault, a settlement established by wealthy individuals tired of governmental taxation.

Upon arrival in Gault, which was characterized by its decentralized, self-reliant societies, Manikova began to replicate himself. As he amassed resources and power, individuals began to disappear, leading to rising suspicions and ultimately, confrontations with local clans. Manikova's superior technology allowed him to overcome resistance with brutal efficiency, and he fortified his dominance over the colony.

The Union government on Eden eventually decided to intervene, but their attempts culminated in failure when their military ship, Eden's Justice, was destroyed by missiles launched from Gault before they could retaliate. A subsequent, simpler response came from a neighboring colony, Farhome, which launched a relativistic projectile dubbed "The Bullet," striking Gault with devastating force, annihilating the colony entirely.

The chapter concludes by reflecting on the repercussions of Manikova's actions, establishing a lasting stigma against multiples and positioning Manikova himself as the subject of blame for the destruction of Gault, ultimately framing his pursuit of immortality and replication as a catastrophic endeavor in human history.

002

In this chapter, the protagonist reflects on the circumstances that led him to become an Expendable, revealing that he voluntarily chose this perilous position under the guise of becoming an "Immortal." He recalls his recruitment experience on the colony ship ****Drakkar****, specifically his meeting with Gwen Johansen, a no-nonsense recruiter who outlined the various dangerous tasks he would face, all of which would likely result in his death. Despite the risks, he felt desperate to leave his home planet, ****Midgard****, and saw signing up as an Expendable as his sole option to gain passage.

During the recruitment session, Gwen informs him of specific jobs—external repairs during interstellar transit, exposure to local flora and fauna, necessary medical experiments, and potential combat situations. The protagonist acknowledges his lack of practical skills and understands that, although he would often find himself in life-threatening situations, he signed the contract to escape Midgard quickly.

As Gwen explains the reality of being an Expendable, the protagonist learns the grim truth: most Expendables often do not end their own suffering when facing death, contrary to his initial belief that he could simply reset his existence through a backup mechanism. Furthermore, Gwen reveals that he is the only applicant for the position of Expendable, despite thousands of applications for other roles on board the ****Drakkar****.

Gwen challenges him on what makes him feel suited for the role, considering his background as a historian in a society where knowledge is readily accessible to everyone. With the absence of low-level academic opportunities, factories, or military positions, the protagonist expresses frustration at the lack of purpose in Midgard that drives many young individuals to seek riskier paths, concluding that he responds to this ennui by gravitating toward trouble. This chapter sets the stage for understanding the motivations behind his choice and the bleak environment of Midgard that he desperately wished to escape.

010

In this chapter, the protagonist reflects on her experiences aboard the ***Drakkar***, dealing with the peculiarities of being an Expendable. While she had been prepared for dangerous situations by Jemma, the reality of a near-suicide mission is disorienting, especially when someone unexpectedly rescues her. Initially, life on the ship is monotonous; the voyage to Niflheim had been uneventful, allaying fears of impending disaster.

However, a sudden turn of events disrupts this calm. While traveling at an incredible speed, the ship collides with an unknown object, causing significant damage to the nose cone and leading to a radiation leak. The main character is called upon to replace a faulty power coupling, which she learns is critical to maintaining the ship's shielding from lethal radiation. Donning a vacuum suit, she understands the urgency of her task, despite the terrifying conditions she faces.

The protagonist engages in a high-risk procedure to fix the unit, enduring intense pain and panic as she experiences acute radiation exposure. Her vision blurs, and her body starts deteriorating from radiation burns. Despite the dire situation, she manages to follow instructions and completes the replacement, restoring the ship's shielding, though not without personal sacrifice. Even though she knows this is a critical experience that must be retained, she grapples with the haunting memories attached.

After uploading to a new instantiation of herself, Mickey2, the safety concerns remain, with several crew members suffering from the fallout of the radiation. She quickly learns to adapt again, getting outfitted in a vacuum suit to perform emergency repairs on the ship's hull using nanites. The chapter concludes with the protagonist reflecting on her own limits as she achieves what feels like a minor miracle, restoring the ship while navigating the challenges of her own physical suffering and survival in the harshness of interstellar space.

003

In this chapter, the tension between the two central characters, Seven and Eight, escalates as they confront the consequences of their unusual situation. The chapter begins with Seven being aware of the difficult predicament they find themselves in, particularly with the revelation that Eight has unexpectedly emerged from the tank, despite the protocol that suggests only one should survive. The dialogue reveals the complexity of their emotional state – frustration, humor, and a hint of desperation as they navigate their predicament.

Seven reflects on the difficulties of waking up from the tank, describing it metaphorically as akin to recovering from a hangover mixed with other ailments. Eight expresses anger and disbelief regarding how the situation unfolded, blaming Seven for the crisis. This leads to a discussion about cleanliness, where humor sits alongside the underlying tension. Their back-and-forth banter highlights their established relationship, yet a sense of urgency persists as they recognize the dire stakes if they are discovered to be duplicates.

The chapter transitions into a broader reflection on the survival challenges faced by their colony, drawing comparisons with historical human colonization efforts. Seven contextualizes their food scarcity situation, noting that they are currently living on limited rations, creating a backdrop of desperation that underscores their situation.

The dynamic shifts again when Eight acquires a stubborn refusal to sacrifice himself for the greater good, suggesting that Responsibility should rest on Seven. The realization hits that their lives hinge on difficult decisions, not just personal choices but existential threats linked to the colony's survival.

As they discuss strategies, a sense of impending dread reveals itself. Seven considers meeting with Command, but both characters agree that such a confrontation may be perilous. The conversation circles around logistics and practicality, but ultimately leads to a confrontation with their mortality in the cyclor chamber: a life-and-death decision looms overhead.

The chapter climaxes with an unintended moment of levity as they joke about the cyclic process of their existence, illustrating their deep-seated bond amidst the life-threatening decisions facing them. The final scene situates readers on the edge, as they prepare for an uncertain fate, leaving them grappling with the moral implications of survival under the corrupting pressures of their reality.

007

In this chapter, the protagonist, Mickey Barnes, reflects on his situation as he faces a meeting with Hieronymus Marshall. He is apprehensive about being late, especially considering the potential consequences on his food supply. Upon entering Marshall's office, he encounters his colleague Berto and is immediately placed on the defensive by Marshall, who questions his iterations as an Expendable.

Mickey admits to being the eighth iteration, and Marshall interrogates Berto about how Mickey's previous iteration ended up "lost." Berto explains that Mickey7 fell into a deep crevasse during a reconnaissance mission, which leads to Marshall's frustration over the failure to recover Mickey's body. Marshall emphasizes that their agricultural section is struggling, and the loss of Mickey7 has resulted in a significant hit to their food supplies. As a penalty, both Mickey and Berto's rations are docked by twenty percent, which leaves them with insufficient calories.

Once out of the meeting, the tension between Mickey and Berto boils over. Mickey confronts Berto about not being truthful regarding the circumstances of his last death, revealing feelings of betrayal and distrust. Berto attempts to defend himself, explaining that he would not have left Mickey to die intentionally, even if he felt it was risky to attempt a rescue. Their interaction highlights the fraught relationship and ongoing dynamics between their friendship and the harsh realities they face.

Later, Mickey returns to his quarters and finds his new iteration, Eight, sprawled in bed. They engage in a discussion about their operational duties and rationing dilemmas. Mickey reveals their recent repercussions regarding caloric intake and the necessity of planning for any hazardous assignments. Eight proposes that he should handle the next dangerous task while Mickey takes it easy, but Mickey asserts his unwillingness to take on all perilous jobs. Their conversation signifies a shifting partnership as two iterations must coexist, share responsibilities, and navigate the complexities of their existence in a harsh environment.

As the chapter concludes, Mickey receives an urgent command from headquarters, suggesting that whatever awaits him may challenge the fragile cooperation he has begun to establish with Eight.

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.

025

In this gripping chapter, the protagonist, Mickey7, emerges from the creepers' tunnels into a wintry landscape. The atmosphere is paradoxically beautiful and harsh, with knee-deep snow and a demand for more oxygen than his rebreather can provide. While trudging towards the dome, he considers whether to inform others of his approach, pondering the implications of his actions, especially regarding the fragile dynamics with the group, particularly Marshall, who might order an attack against him.

As Mickey approaches the perimeter, he is met by activation lights from the pylons, which indicates the high alert status following recent creeper incursions. He defensively holds up a trigger cord in a desperate bid for self-preservation. Marshall's voice soon cuts through the tension, instructing Mickey to remove his pack, which presumably contains a dangerous weapon. Mickey refuses, introducing a standoff that highlights the distrust between him and Marshall. A chat opens with Berto, revealing further tension and urgency for communication, pushing Mickey to demand that Marshall confront him directly.

The chapter unfolds with rigorous dialogue between Mickey and Marshall, forcing the protagonist to defend his choices, especially regarding the fate of Eight, the last version of himself killed. Secrets unravel, revealing that creepers have taken the antimatter weapon, heightening the stakes of their confrontation. Marshall's fury culminates in a command to execute Mickey. However, as harsh reality sets in, one soldier reminds Marshall of the danger posed by the weapon Mickey carries, displaying the precariousness of their situation.

In the end, Mickey attempts to reason with Marshall, asserting the need for diplomacy rather than violence. He argues the complexities of human-creeper relations, emphasizing that they are not at war in the traditional sense. The chapter concludes with a temporary truce as Marshall's orders are stymied, allowing for a moment of tenuous peace between the protagonists, who step back together toward the dome, albeit with unresolved tension.

The chapter interweaves themes of survival, identity, war, and the moral implications of their situation, leading to a poignant reflection on the nature of humanity and the choices that define them.

004

In a moment of desperation, the narrator contemplates his regrets while facing a disassembler field interface that threatens to reduce him to slurry for Niflheim's colonists. Despite this harrowing situation, he reconciles with his past decision involving Gwen Johansen, which led to his current predicament. Stranded in Kiruna and on Darius Blank's bad side, he reflects on his friendship with Berto. They had become close during school, sharing a passion for flight simulators, while Berto excelled in everything. Berto's talent led to a successful career in pog-ball, but years later, as Berto prepared for a comeback, he unknowingly put the narrator in a dire financial situation.

Despite warning Berto of his chances, the narrator placed a bet on Berto's eventual failure, leading to overwhelming debt that left him vulnerable to Blank's threats. Berto, feeling guilty, suggested the narrator join him aboard the *Drakkar*, but the odds were against him considering his lack of qualifications. After receiving an immediate rejection from a Security position, the narrator tried to downplay his debts, thinking Blank wouldn't kill him simply because he owed money. Yet, he soon learned the harsh truth when confronted by a thug who tortured him using a neural inducer.

Surviving that encounter unsettled him, but he sought an escape route through a position on the *Drakkar*. When he discovered only an "Expendable" slot was available, Berto voiced his concerns but ultimately left the decision to the narrator, who was determined to escape his current circumstances. As he prepared for the interview, the narrator felt a sense of resignation towards the potential dangers that awaited him, reflecting that the fear of death had already manifested in his earlier traumatic experience. Thus begins his journey

towards the unknown aboard the *Drakkar*, a path paved with risks and a flicker of hope for a better future .

009

In this chapter, a tense situation unfolds as the protagonist encounters a group of colleagues near the main lock, including Marshall, Dugan, and some Security personnel. The atmosphere is thick with anxiety as a monitor reveals a blackened mass in the lock, identified as Gallaher, who has suffered severe injuries after an assault from an unidentified creature, later determined to be "creepers." The crew's desperate measures to control the situation led to venting plasma into the lock, a decision that left Gallaher critically wounded.

As the protagonist processes the urgency, Berto reveals that the attackers are creepers, creatures with formidable mandibles capable of causing devastating damage. Dugan expresses surprise over the lack of concrete data on these creatures and urges the protagonist—who has had unsettling personal encounters with the creepers—to assist in procuring vital information. The urgency escalates as Marshall orders the team to gear up and prepare for a thorough scan and eradication of any creepers in the vicinity, stressing the dangers they pose to the colony.

As the group heads out, other characters exhibit a mix of skepticism regarding armor use in snowy conditions, with Dugan adamantly arguing for its necessity after witnessing the lethal power of the creepers. The protagonist shares some trepidation, recounting personal trauma but ultimately gearing up for action. The soldiers embark into the harsh, cold environment of Roanoke, reflecting on past failures in similar situations, hinting at the hostile nature of the planet.

The narrative shifts to the protagonist's internal contemplation of the precarious situation. As they prepare for potential confrontation with the creepers, the threat becomes painfully real when Dugan finds himself ensnared by one of the creatures. Tension peaks as Dugan disappears beneath the snow, and the protagonist, alongside Cat, must react quickly to fend off the threat and escape with evidence of the encounter, fighting against the odds in the bitter cold and amid the chaos of their dire straits. The chapter ends with a cliffhanger, leaving readers anxious for the outcome of their struggle against the creepers.

014

In a dimly lit cafeteria, the protagonist, Mickey, shares a meal with his friend Berto, who playfully encourages him to indulge in the food available. Despite the atmosphere being slightly tense due to the presence of Security personnel, Berto, trying to ease the mood, orders rabbit meat, which shocks Mickey, but Berto insists that he's not willing to starve himself. Mickey feels out of place as the group's subject of ridicule. As they order food, Mickey can only keep his choices under a thousand kcal, hence settling for potatoes, fried crickets, and a small salad.

Berto reminisces about a daring aerial maneuver he performed in a flitter weeks earlier, claiming he gathered bets on his ability to fly through a narrow rock formation. Mickey, initially impressed, becomes furious upon realizing the gamble involved risking his own life for mere calories. Berto brushes it off as no big deal, but Mickey's frustrations boil over as he realizes that their friendship has been tarnished by this reckless behavior.

Their tension escalates when Darren, a member of the Security team, confronts them at the table. Initially trying to dismiss it, the situation escalates as Darren pokes Berto, pressing him. Berto retaliates, leading to a physical confrontation that quickly spirals into chaos with Security personnel joining in. Mickey finds himself tackled to the ground as he tries to help but is overpowered.

The aftermath unfolds in Marshall's office, where the two friends contend with the consequences of their actions. Marshall, the authority figure, probes them about the fight. Berto captures the mood of the incident as a misunderstanding, deflecting blame towards Darren. Adjusting the narrative and leveraging surveillance footage showing Berto's reckless stunt, Marshall critiques Security's judgment while resolving that Berto must face increased scrutiny, reduced rations, and additional work duties. Berto's previous antics and disregard for rules weigh heavily as Mickey shares in the consequences, receiving a ration reduction for merely being associated with Berto. In a tense atmosphere, both walk away realizing their precarious positions within the colony.