The Ministry of Time Chapter 2 Summary

Gore boards the ship, met by the muffled figures of the watch, amidst the unsettling tilt caused by encircling sea ice. Below deck, it's almost warm from the clustered crew hastening through an emergency. He learns from the ship's surgeon, Stanley, that it's July 24, 1847, though his delayed response highlights his haze from the cold. Despite his struggles, he insists on attending the emergency command meeting.

Gathered in the Great Cabin of *Erebus*, the mood is heavy with the recent death of Sir John Franklin, and the atmosphere feels spectral, as though the cabin itself mourned. Captain Fitzjames, who now leads after Franklin, listens as Lieutenant Irving delivers troubling news. The rations aboard the ship are dangerously low and compromised; some tinned provisions are inedible, evidently defective before departure.

Fairholme, the third lieutenant, listens as Irving attempts to frame their situation in a religious context, but Gore urges more straightforward discourse. Fitzjames helps clarify the problem with the rations and ultimately asks for updates on any game caught. Gore's meager catch of three partridges and a distant gull highlights their dire circumstances.

As they assess their dwindling supplies, Fitzjames indicates that neither ship's crew can last another year without ration cuts, prompting a consensus to reduce the rations to two-thirds. Although Stanley warns of the potential risks of weakening the sick men even further, Fitzjames insists on this compromise to keep as many men alive for their eventual return.

The tension is palpable as Gore contemplates the implications. The pressing question remains: what if the ice never breaks? Outside, the ice shifts ominously, echoing the ship's straining hull. Creaking and cracking foretell the dangers lurking in their isolation, underscoring the threat to their survival. Gore reflects on both the loss of the ship's cat, which had succumbed to the harsh conditions, and the looming despair that surrounds them all.