

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 opens with the protagonist reflecting on her life aboard the *Drakkar*, particularly the role she plays as an Expendable. Though Jemma had prepared her for the inherent dangers of her position, nothing could have fully prepared her for the harsh reality of a mission that bordered on suicide. The responsibilities she carries, which involve risking her life for the mission's success and the safety of the crew, are both a heavy burden and a point of personal conflict. Early in the journey, life on the ship had been relatively uneventful. The voyage to Niflheim, initially expected to be routine, allowed the crew to momentarily let go of their fears of impending catastrophe, offering a temporary sense of relief. For a while, it seemed like the worst was behind them, and the crew members allowed themselves to relax, forgetting the constant tension they faced during such perilous voyages.

However, this fragile peace is shattered when the ship unexpectedly collides with an unknown object while traveling at an incredible speed. The violent impact causes serious damage to the nose cone, which in turn triggers a dangerous radiation leak. The crew's safety is immediately compromised, and the protagonist is called upon to address the critical issue of a faulty power coupling. This coupling is essential for maintaining the ship's shielding, which protects the crew from the lethal radiation that is now leaking into the vessel. The protagonist quickly realizes the gravity of her task as she suits up in a vacuum suit, understanding that the success of the mission now rests solely on her ability to fix the damaged power coupling. The urgency of the situation becomes palpable as the crew faces the possibility of catastrophic radiation exposure, and the protagonist is acutely aware of the risks she must take to ensure the survival of the ship and its inhabitants.

As the protagonist begins the high-risk procedure to replace the damaged coupling, she feels a wave of panic, as the effects of radiation exposure begin to take hold. The

procedure is excruciatingly painful, and her body starts to deteriorate as radiation burns begin to take their toll. Her vision blurs, and every movement becomes more difficult as her body weakens under the intense conditions. Despite the agony, she presses forward, focusing solely on completing the task at hand. Her training kicks in, allowing her to push through the physical and mental pain as she follows the precise instructions needed to replace the coupling. When the task is finally completed, the ship's shielding is restored, and the immediate threat is quelled. However, the victory feels hollow as the protagonist is left to face the personal cost of her actions, knowing that the scars, both physical and psychological, will remain long after the mission is over.



After the critical event, the protagonist undergoes the process of uploading to a new version of herself—Mickey2—hoping to overcome the toll that the radiation exposure has taken on her body. However, despite the "rebirth" that comes with the upload, the effects of the radiation still linger, with several crew members suffering from radiation sickness. The protagonist quickly adapts to her new instantiation and dons another vacuum suit, preparing for more emergency repairs on the ship. This time, the repairs involve using nanites to restore the ship's damaged hull, a technological marvel that allows her to work in the harsh environment of space. As she works on the repairs, the protagonist is aware of her ongoing physical suffering but remains focused on the task. The process is grueling, but the protagonist presses on, motivated by the understanding that the survival of the *Drakkar* and its crew depends on her abilities to overcome these challenges. The physical strain, however, is undeniable, and the emotional weight of each repair done becomes harder to bear.

The chapter culminates in a moment of reflection as the protagonist considers the limits of her endurance. Despite her outward success in completing her duties, the toll on her body and mind has been significant. The ship is slowly being restored, but the protagonist is deeply aware of the personal sacrifices she's made along the way. Each moment on the ship forces her to reckon with her own physical and emotional limits as she navigates the pressures of her role. Her experiences aboard the *Drakkar* are shaping her into someone new, someone capable of pushing through unimaginable

hardships. But with each success, the realization grows that survival in space is not only about overcoming physical barriers but also about dealing with the psychological scars that accompany such an existence. In the harsh environment of interstellar space, where every decision could be life or death, the protagonist is forced to examine her identity and what it truly means to survive. The emotional toll of her journey becomes just as important as the physical one, highlighting the complex nature of survival in an unforgiving universe.

