

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 begins with Mickey, the protagonist, feeling anxious about an impending meeting with Marshall, the supreme commander of their mission. Reflecting on his initial days aboard the *Drakkar*, Mickey recalls his first unsettling experience with zero gravity, a terrifying moment marked by an unexpected free fall. This experience left Mickey with a sense of dread that only deepened when he met Marshall for the first time. Despite the fear that gripped him, Mickey did his best to maintain his composure, but Marshall's imposing presence made the encounter unforgettable. The power dynamic between them became clear right away, and Mickey found himself intimidated by Marshall's authority, setting the tone for the complex relationship that would unfold as they worked together.

Marshall's introduction to the new colonists, delivered in the lounge, was marked by sarcastic remarks and a sharp assessment of their space travel experience. Dugan, a fellow colonist, voiced his frustration over the lack of personal effects being transferred, only to have Marshall reveal that personal items were prohibited due to the mission's strict weight constraints. This decision caused an immediate sense of dissatisfaction among the colonists, as many had hoped to bring along small comforts to ease their long journey. Mickey tried to protest, questioning the logic behind the restricted luggage allowance, but his concerns were met with Marshall's cold, unyielding response. Marshall then went on to explain the reasoning behind these restrictions, highlighting the significant limitations placed on the mission's mass. He revealed that transporting the colonists as frozen embryos was a strategic choice, made to minimize the ship's weight and keep the mission on course. This conversation served as a sobering reminder of the sacrifices they had to make in order to ensure the survival of the mission.

The conversation between Mickey and Marshall takes a tense turn when Marshall questions Mickey about his role in the mission. Mickey, frustrated and attempting to downplay the tension, makes a sarcastic comment about being “Expendable.” Marshall, however, is not amused by this remark and swiftly expresses his disapproval. The intensity of Marshall’s reaction makes it clear that such flippant remarks are not tolerated in the high-pressure environment of the mission. He then orders Mickey to find a sling to sleep in, as the station does not have the resources to provide individual quarters. This request leaves Mickey feeling unsettled, as it reinforces the harsh reality of their living conditions. The lack of personal space and the seemingly dehumanizing approach to their accommodations serve as a constant reminder that the mission is focused on survival, not comfort. Mickey is forced to come to terms with the fact that his physical and emotional needs are secondary to the success of the mission.

As the chapter unfolds, Mickey discusses the situation with Dugan and Bree, another colonist, who reveals more about Marshall's personal beliefs. Bree explains that Marshall adheres to Natalist ideologies, which hold that when a person’s original body dies, their soul also ceases to exist. According to this philosophy, bio-printed individuals, like Mickey and the others, are seen as soulless and lacking intrinsic value. This revelation leaves Mickey feeling uneasy, especially given his status as an Expendable. The idea that his life holds less meaning than those of the original colonists shakes Mickey to his core. He realizes that his existence, as a clone, is viewed with disdain by those who hold these beliefs, adding another layer of complexity to his role on the mission. Dugan, trying to ease the tension, jokes that as long as Mickey remains alive in his current form, he is still considered valuable in Marshall’s eyes. While the remark is meant to provide some comfort, it does little to quell Mickey’s growing discomfort. The chapter ends with Mickey reflecting on his place in this unforgiving world, fully aware that his survival hinges on navigating not only physical challenges but also the deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes of those around him.

This chapter emphasizes the psychological toll that comes with being seen as “Expendable.” Mickey’s struggles with identity, value, and survival are central to the

narrative, illustrating the deep emotional conflict that comes with living in a world where life is considered disposable. As the chapter concludes, Mickey is left to grapple with the complexities of his existence, aware that the mission's harsh realities extend beyond the physical dangers of space. His experiences aboard the *Drakkar* will force him to confront his own self-worth, the value placed on his life by others, and the moral challenges that come with being part of a mission that treats him as a mere tool for survival.

