

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 begins with Mickey sitting in a dimly lit cafeteria, having a meal with his friend Berto. Despite the tension hanging in the air due to the presence of Security personnel, Berto attempts to lighten the mood by jokingly encouraging Mickey to enjoy the food. Berto, determined not to starve, orders rabbit meat, much to Mickey's surprise, but he insists on having enough to eat despite their difficult situation. Mickey, on the other hand, feels awkward and out of place as he is the subject of ridicule among their group. With limited food options, Mickey keeps his choices within a thousand kcal, opting for potatoes, fried crickets, and a small salad, clearly signaling his internal struggles with the food scarcity. The awkwardness of the situation is palpable, as they sit surrounded by the cold, unwelcoming presence of the guards, each choice feeling like a balancing act between survival and compliance.

Berto, perhaps sensing Mickey's discomfort, shifts the focus by recalling a dangerous aerial maneuver he performed in a flitter a few weeks earlier. He describes how he bet others on his ability to fly through a narrow rock formation, adding a layer of bravado to his recounting. Initially impressed by the feat, Mickey soon becomes furious as he realizes the gamble involved wasn't just a stunt for fun—it risked his own life in exchange for what was essentially food. Berto brushes off Mickey's anger, minimizing the gravity of the situation, but Mickey's frustration grows as he realizes that their friendship, once built on mutual respect, has been tainted by Berto's reckless behavior. The tension between them is now clear, as Mickey starts questioning not only Berto's choices but their dynamic as a whole. Mickey's growing realization of the disparity in their values creates a chasm between them, complicating their relationship further as the consequences of their actions loom.

The tension reaches a boiling point when Darren, a member of the Security team, approaches their table, challenging them. Initially trying to dismiss the situation,

Berto's attempts to deflect quickly escalate the confrontation, and Darren's taunting only serves to provoke him. The moment escalates into a physical altercation, with Berto retaliating against Darren's push, and within seconds, Security personnel join the fray. Mickey, attempting to mediate the situation, is overpowered and tackled to the ground by the guards. His efforts to help only result in further physical restraint, leaving him powerless as the chaos unfolds around him. The escalating violence reveals how easily the dynamics of power and authority can spiral out of control in a confined, tense environment. Mickey, caught in the crossfire, is forced to face the brutal consequences of their actions, his role as an innocent bystander offering him little protection in this volatile atmosphere.

The aftermath of the fight unfolds in Marshall's office, where the two friends are held accountable for their actions. Marshall, the authority figure, interrogates them about the confrontation, seeking to understand the chain of events. Berto, attempting to downplay the situation, insists that it was simply a misunderstanding and attempts to shift the blame to Darren. Marshall, however, pulls up surveillance footage that shows Berto's reckless stunt and critiques the Security team's judgment in allowing such behavior. Despite his deflection, Berto faces the consequences of his actions, with a reduction in rations, added duties, and increased scrutiny. Mickey, by association, is also penalized, receiving a reduction in his rations as punishment for merely being with Berto during the incident. The weight of their actions sinks in as both Mickey and Berto walk away from the office, realizing how fragile their positions within the colony truly are. The chapter closes with an overwhelming sense of uncertainty about their future, underscored by the harsh realities of their existence.