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Chapter 2

100-Year Blizzard

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR (V.O)

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.
Chapter 2: 100-Year Blizzard.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT).

SOUND: TV Weather Channel broadcast (FADE IN)

Scene One: Int. Cole residence, living room – Day

NARRATOR

All the talk over the past 48 hours was about the blizzard. Because it had been unusually mild for several winters—mild for North Dakota, that is—folks were saying

"FOLKS"

"We're due for a big 'n."

NARRATOR

For three years in a row Osborn County had less than two feet of snow. "Freakish" is what the old-timers called it. "Global warming" is what others said. Still others,

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"FOLKS"

"It's the guvmint seedin' the clouds with chemicals."

"That's fine by me,"

NARRATOR

Mr. Falmouth of Falmouth Drugs said.

MR. FALMOUTH

"Well, if it's ten degrees warmer in February and I don't have to shovel three feet of snow every morning I say let them guvmint boys seed all they want to!"

NARRATOR

Well, that's what people do in small towns, talk about the weather. Especially out on the Great Plains where the weather can kill you if you're not careful. Tornadoes, droughts, heat waves, polar vortices, dust storms, blizzards. Come spring, a sudden thaw could turn a frozen creek into a raging torrent.

So people were talking again, this time about the coming snowstorm.

"FOLKS"

"'A hundred-year blizzard' is what the Weather Channel is callin' it."

CASSIE

"Is it going to snow for a hundred years?"

FRANK

"No Cassie. A hundred-year blizzard is one that's so big it only happens maybe once in a hundred years."

NARRATOR

That's how Frank explained it to his daughter, anyway. Having grown

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up in the south, he too had never heard the term, one-hundred-year blizzard, and didn't like the sound of it. He asked a fellow officer, a corporal born and raised in North Dakota, what everyone was chattering about.

CASSIE

"I wouldn't care if it snowed for a hundred years, I love the snow!"

NARRATOR

Her parents glanced at each other and smiled. At least one of them had adapted well to the transfer from Mississippi to North Dakota. Along with all the other challenges the move brought, Frank and Ellie worried about Cassie, how she would adjust. When they first told her they had to move she got very upset. The thought of leaving her friends made her cry.

ELLIE

"You'll make new friends honey."

CASSIE

"Not like Fibber, Mimi and Rush."

MUSIC: (Incidental)

NARRATOR

Satellite and Doppler radar made weather forecasting a lot more accurate over the years but any old-timer could tell you that the newfangled technologies still got it wrong. There had been talk of a 100-year blizzard for the past three years and it never showed up. If it wasn't the jet stream it was el niño or a polar vortex or global warming or some such nonsense but lately all these fancy weather presenters were wrong as often as they were right.

Unlike the grown-ups, Cassie wasn't concerned about the

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weather. What she was concerned about was Show & Tell Day. When she'd heard that Friday was Show & Tell Day her first thought was Jet.

CASSIE

"I want to bring in my kitty!"

NARRATOR

Ms Henderson, her 5th-grade teacher, smiled but Cassie could see it was her polite smile, the smile grown-ups put on when they pretend they're happy but really they're not.

MS HENDERSON

"I'm afraid bringing your cat to school could be a problem, Cassandra."

CASSIE

"Why? I used to take Jet to the beach all the time. She loves to go places with me!"

MS HENDERSON

"I'm sure she does but some of the other children might be allergic to cats."

CASSIE

"I doubt that."

MS HENDERSON

"And if we let you bring in your cat, some of the other children may want to bring in their pets too."

CASSIE

"That's OK. Jet gets along with everybody."

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MS HENDERSON

"Yes, but what if one of the other students has a big dog that scares your kitty?"

CASSIE

"Jet's not afraid of dogs."

MS HENDERSON

"What if someone brings in their pet parakeet and Jet scares the bird?"

NARRATOR

Cassie hadn't thought of that possibility. She'd never seen Jet scare a bird before so she couldn't picture it.

MUSIC: (Incidental)

Scene Two: Int. Cole residence, kitchen – Day

SOUND: Breakfast preparation

NARRATOR

On Show & Tell Day Cassie took Jet's catnip toy mouse and dangled it over her travel crate. For this special occasion Cassie put a new collar on Jet, one that she'd braided herself using shoelaces recycled from her own sneakers. Jet looked sleeker and sharper than ever, Cassie thought, sitting pretty with her new collar, Cassie's favorite color combination of red, white and black.

ELLIE

"Cassie, are you sure Ms Henderson said it was OK to bring Jet to Show & Tell?"

CASSIE

"Yeah!"

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NARRATOR

That wasn't exactly what Ms Henderson had said, but Cassandra had done her homework.

CASSIE

"I asked all my classmates what they're bringing to Show & Tell. No one's bringing a pet so there was no problem. And I asked if anyone has allergies. Brittany's allergic to peanut butter, Kevin's allergic to strawberries and tomatoes and David's allergic to penicillin and wool. No one's allergic to cats!"

MUSIC: (Incidental)

Scene Three: Ext. School bus traveling on highway – Day

SOUND: School bus motoring along; children talking on bus

NARRATOR

Whose idea was it? The kind of idea no one admits to after the fact. Correction: Idea is not the right word. This was not an idea. Impulse is more like it. And when it comes to 10-year olds, impulses rule.

KID ON BUS

"Do it, dude! Do the dog trick!"

NARRATOR

Some sugared-up kids in the back of the bus were daring their buddy to "do the dog trick," the one he did the year before coming back from a field trip to the Science Center.

The bus was crawling along at ten miles per hour. The driver was sweating bullets as visibility was down to 25 feet. Then the kid in the back of the bus stomped his boot on the floor and shrieked a howling puppy cry.

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SOUND: Foot stomp

SOUND: Puppy yelp

NARRATOR

Trouble was, the kid was too good with his impression. The piercing dog yelp was so convincing and the driver was so white-knuckle tense he jammed the brakes.

SOUND: Airbrake

NARRATOR (cont.)

Despite all his experience and training, he did exactly what he shouldn't have—slammed the brakes on sheer ice—but it was already too late!

MUSIC: (Cliffhanger1)

NARRATOR (cont.)

The rear wheels locked, and the tail end of the bus swung out in a sickening arc.

SOUND: Engine rev

Suddenly the bus was a sheer metal wall advancing into oncoming traffic! Any second the whole bus could be T-boned by a tractor-trailer!

SOUND: Truck horn

NARRATOR (cont.)

That was the driver's greatest fear but it didn't happen. What happened instead was the bus's rear end suddenly lost contact with the road surface. He could feel the tail end drop into nothing—no road, just the heart-stopping vacuum of dangling half out over open

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air.

NARRATOR (cont.)

The ravine!

MUSIC: (Cliffhanger3 [sample: Bartok])

NARRATOR (cont.)

They were on the ravine road, the very road that motorists had long petitioned the County to replace its old rotten wooden guard rails with new steel ones. The same stretch of road the County claimed was in the State's jurisdiction, the same road that was not traveled enough by the sort of people who were in a position to do anything about improving its safety.

All beside the point now, the driver thought as he felt the rear end of the bus surrender to gravity's relentless tug, and heard the terrified screams of 28 children as the bus toppled and tumbled backward into the ravine.

SOUND: screams of terrified children

SOUND: crashing metal

MUSIC: (FADE IN) Blizzard Theme

NARRATOR

Next: Frank & Ellie Cole have to face the consequences of having sent their daughter out into the worst blizzard Osborn has ever seen.

MUSIC: (Blizzard Theme) (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 2]