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Chapter 11

The Valley of the Narsies

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR (V.O)

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.
Chapter 11: The Valley of the Narsies.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT).

Scene One: Ext., top of palisades overlooking valley – Day.

SOUND: birds chirping, flies buzzing in meadow

CASSIE

What the heck is this?

NARRATOR

Cassie stared at the green cylindrical device bolted onto a pedestal overlooking the valley. The device looked like her father's antique black and white portable TV set. Under its shiny black screen was a white button labelled PRESS TO PLAY. She pressed it.

SOUND: computer-mechanical click-bleep

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MINISTRY OF TOURISM PR SPOKESPERSON

From the pink granite palisades that span the broad flood plain above Myriver one marvels at a wide vista of undulating hills, some of which are deeply forested, while others are elaborately terraced with the spectacular grella orchards for which the region is justly celebrated.

CASSIE

Wow!

NARRATOR

Cassie stood on one of the palisades, surveying the valley below. From her vantage she could see where the Pryde estuary curved into the steep bluffs sheltering the harbor. Down below in the placid waters a whole fleet of boats had gathered. From humble pirogues to outrigger catamarans to sailboats and yachts and even a few tall ships of the archaic style, one painted all black and outfitted like a pirate's corvette, vessels of all shapes and sizes crowded the the harbor under a brilliant sun.

SOUND: marina, clang of boat rigging, seagulls

CASSIE

It's so beautiful!

SLY

Yeah well don't be fooled. Where there's yachts there's Narsies. And

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if they don't haul us in on suspicion of pilfering their goods they'll bore us to death with their tales of travel to exotic lands.

MEMYSELFANDI

You take a rather dim view of the Narsies. Don't forget that many Narsies rank among the wealthiest and most influential citizens of the Empire.

SLY

Yeah, I know. But that don't necessarily make them inaresting.

CASSIE

It looks like a regatta down there!

MEMYSELFANDI

Well it probably has to do with the Service Fair.

CASSIE

The Service Fair?

MEMYSELFANDI

Yes, every seven years the Corpus sponsors a Service Fair. Contestants from all over the Empire compete to win prized service positions working for various enterprises in Marketmarket.

SLY

How do you know so much about Narsie business if you've been stuck up on a wall for years?

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MEMYSELFANDI

Well, to learn to speak Narsi properly, one must study the cultural practices of Narsies as well. There's more to a language than vocabulary, grammar and syntax you know. Anyone can learn Narsi words, but to speak it idiomatically takes years of study and total immersion within a Narsie community.

NARSIE GUARD

Kalka!

NARRATOR

A band of uniformed guards sprung from the trees. Memyselfandi waved his arms signaling Cassie and Sly to stop.

MEMYSELFANDI

He said 'Freeze – don't move'.

NARSIE GUARD

Sin durben o'ten valk–denert!

MEMYSELFANDI

He says we're trespassing.

NARRATOR

One of the guards grabbed Cassie's hands and wrenched them behind her back.

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SLY

Hey that's a bit much, don't you think? Handcuffing a little girl?

NARRATOR

They ignored Sly. Another guard extended a telescoping rod with long pincers that seized Sly by the neck.

Memyselfandi didn't resist. He held out both hands which were quickly tied together.

Yet another guard collared Jet with a choker-halter.

CASSIE

Leave him alone!

NARRATOR

They ignored Cassie as well. Memyselfandi turned to one of the guards and said,

MEMYSELFANDI

Qu'in dala bersip vayden atchilla?

NARRATOR

The guards went silent, glanced at each other, then at Memyselfandi.

NARSIE GUARD

Qu'ern?

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi understood the guard's confusion: he had asked, Did I

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just hear you correctly? Memyselandi responded,

MEMYSELFANDI

Ndilla. Bonasta fervilus. Kwaya mendispuril.

NARRATOR

The guards couldn't believe this strange egg creature was speaking perfect Narsi. The lead guard squeezed a button on his uniform pocket and spoke into it.

NARSIE GUARD

Goella isertilon. Narsi vern octo senzeren. Navalootery.

CASSIE

What did he say?

MEMYSELFANDI

He said we're probably not poachers and that one of us speaks perfect Narsi.

NARRATOR

Over the guard's headset a static-distorted voice crackled:

NARSIE GUARD

Gertenven o'burlit ness. Hova nilleron indertature.

NARRATOR

Cassie and Sly looked at Memyselandi, who explained.

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MEMYSELFANDI

They're going to bring us to The Count.

CASSIE

The Count? Is that good or bad?

MEMYSELFANDI

Mmm...that rather depends upon the Count.

MUSIC: (Incidental)

Scene Two: Ext. Outside the Count's mansion – Day.

NARRATOR

Uniformed guards shoved them into a windowless van and drove away.

SOUND: vehicle driving away

NARRATOR (cont.)

After around 20 minutes the van stopped and the driver turned off the motor.

SOUND: motor turning off

NARRATOR (cont.)

The rear doors opened and sunlight poured in so bright it made them squint.

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SOUND: car door opening

NARRATOR (cont.)

They looked around and saw they were in a narrow drive that circled the rear of a great white mansion. Three men approached from a carriage house behind the mansion.

SOUND: dogs barking, growling

NARRATOR (cont.)

Two of them held leashes restraining German Shepherds, two dogs for each man. The third man, the one in the middle, was tall and had impeccably coiffed white hair. He looked like he had just stepped out of a hairstylist's salon, every hair perfectly trimmed and accented by a fastidious little white moustache. He gestured toward an entrance leading into the mansion.

MUSIC: (Motion)

Scene Three: Int. Inside the Count's mansion – Day.

NARRATOR

Inside the mansion, still in handcuffs or otherwise restrained, Cassie, Jet, Sly and Memyselfandi were marched down wide hallways flanked on either side by grand rooms.

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MUSIC: (J.S. Bach: Art of Fugue, Fuga A 2 Clavier)

NARRATOR (cont.)

In one room Cassie saw a group of handsome young men dressed in fancy costumes from another era. They stood preening and flirting with pretty young ladies decked out in fabulous gowns and dresses.

SOUND: small crowd conversation

NARRATOR (cont.)

As they passed the next room they could see inside a crowd of older gentlemen dressed in formal black tie, drinking cognac, smoking cigars and laughing heartily while boys dressed like jockeys, hurried about, serving drinks from silver trays.

SOUND: hearty laughter

NARRATOR (cont.)

They were brought into a large room with high walls of dark paneled wood. A matching dark wood table sat in the middle of the room. The tall man with the impeccably coiffed white hair—the Count—gestured for them to sit at the table.

The first thing he said was met with blank stares. Then Memyselfandi translated.

MEMYSELFANDI

The Count is asking each of us where we come from.

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NARRATOR

Every time Memyselfandi translated what the others said the Count looked as if he'd just bitten into something rotten.

THE COUNT

Onanus kin derlavort ento Nordu Dagoda!

MEMYSELFANDI

The Count says he never heard of any realm in the Empire called North Dakota.

CASSIE

North Dakota isn't part of the Empire--

NARRATOR

The Count continued questioning Cassie and Sly while Memyselfandi translated.

THE COUNT

How did you get to the Valley of the Narsies? How long have you been here? What are you doing in the company of a venomous snake and a freak Eggman?

NARRATOR

Whenever Sly went to speak the Count shouted angrily at him.

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THE COUNT

Kank!

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi explained that “kank” meant shut up! A few times the Count said other things after kank, things that Memyselfandi didn’t bother to translate.

After much questioning the Count explained they were in the midst of the Service Fair, and he had no intention of missing the proceedings. He said he would allow them to observe at least one of the games before deciding what he would do with them. At that he stood up and said,

THE COUNT

En donges o’gelleran machus unt Janeramus!

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi told Cassie and Sly it was time for the Janus Event. As they were escorted down the hall the Count spoke almost non-stop.

SOUND: barely audible background of the Count nattering away

NARRATOR (cont.)

Memyselfandi tried to keep up with his fast-talking monologue while the Count waxed on about the size of his estate, his holdings there and abroad, his investments, the key figures he works with in the Emperor’s court, where he’s traveled, where he will be traveling,

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where his children are attending “formation studies,” his personal achievements in the equestrian arts, fencing and chess as well as his prized possessions, pointing out remarkable sculptures and stunning paintings adorning the seemingly endless corridors.

Scene Four: Int. Inside the Count’s ballroom – Night.

MUSIC: (J.S. Bach: Art of Fugue, 18, Fuga A 2 Clavier)

NARRATOR

Finally, Cassie, holding Jet closely, Sly and Memyselfandi were brought into a great room with a high-domed ceiling supported by fluted white columns. The room’s floor was a grand expanse of alternating black and white diamond-shaped marble tiles polished so bright they gleamed as if wet. Throngs of people mingled amidst antique furniture arranged artfully around a ballroom dance floor, eating, drinking and laughing.

SOUND: Party conversation, laughter

NARRATOR (cont.)

A man in a navy blue double-breasted blazer with gold buttons stepped out onto the empty floor and announced something in Narsi.

SOUND: announcement in Narsi

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NARRATOR (cont.)

Memyselfandi whispered to Cassie and Sly that the Greatest Greeter Contest was about to begin. Then, from a sliding panel at the far end of the room a line of contestants trotted out onto the dance floor.

SOUND: audience reaction, surprise and laughter

NARRATOR (cont.)

The contestants were dressed in maroon tunics with brass buttons and gold embroidered epaulets. Their outfits looked like those of doormen at ritzy hotels in a bygone era. But once all the contestants lined up for review Cassie saw how ill-fitting their uniforms were. Close up, the contestants looked less like doormen and more like organ grinders' monkeys. Each one carried three oversized tools: mop, broom, dustpan.

Next, a crew of workers in dark overalls brought out large buckets and balanced them on top of the contestants' heads.

SOUND: liquid splashing, rowdy crowd

NARRATOR (cont.)

Raucous laughter waved through the crowd as splashes of liquid that looked and smelled like vomit slopped over the rims of the buckets onto the contestants.

The audience cheered when a boy dressed as a jockey led a team of beautiful white horses into the room.

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SOUND: horse whinny, crowd cheers

NARRATOR (cont.)

The Count leaned over and said something to Memyselfandi.

Memyselfandi turned and explained to Cassie and Sly.

MEMYSELFANDI

The Count says the challenge is for the contestants to catch the horses' effluent before it falls onto the floor. *And* to do so without spilling any of the pig slop loaded into the buckets balanced on top of their heads!

SOUND: raucous crowd

NARRATOR

Needless to say, mayhem followed. Again the Count whispered something to Memyselfandi which he then relayed to Cassie and Sly.

MEMYSELFANDI

Apparently, the horses have been fed with oats and water laced with powerful laxatives and diuretics to provide the contestants with uh... 'added incentive.'

MUSIC: (Nino Rota: Juliet of the Spirits soundtrack)

SOUND: crowd booing

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NARRATOR

The contest played out frenetically: great extrusions and streams of horse effluent flowed, some of it expertly caught before plopping or splashing onto the marble floor, but much of it was missed, causing the audience to shout and signal thumbs-down as the frantic contestants kept spilling pig slop from their buckets all over themselves and their fellow challengers. Just as the spectacle was spinning into a mess of stinking pandemonium the crowd gasped.

SOUND: crowd gasp, door crash

NARRATOR (cont.)

A squad of Icemen crashed through the open doors shouting and waving shock-blasters.

SOUND: crowd in confusion

NARRATOR (cont.)

The Icemen, suited up in their white adamantium impermium armor zeroed in on the contestants. Quickly scanning the group, they seized the darker-skinned ones and zapped them on the spot.

SOUND: electric zap

NARRATOR (cont.)

The Count strode out onto the ballroom floor and said something to one of the Icemen, who shouted back and waved his shock-blaster. The

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Count looked around but his bodyguards were nowhere in sight.

Sly saw what was happening. He nudged Cassie and hissed.

SLY

Follow me!

CASSIE

What's going on?

SLY

Just follow me *now*!

MUSIC: (Icemen in Pursuit)

Scene Five: Ext. Inside the Count's horse barn – Night.

SOUND: crickets

NARRATOR

Sly darted out of the mansion, across a strip of grass and into the carriage house behind the mansion. He slid along until they came to the horse barn.

SLY

Cassie! Go hide under the haystack! And not a peep out of you—and that goes for Jet too!

SOUND: horse whinnying

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NARRATOR

Suddenly, Sly stood up, flared his menacing cowl and hissed.

SOUND: snake hiss

ICEMAN 1

Holy fu—!

SOUND: shock-blaster firing

ICEMAN 2

Cease fire! Cease fire! Are you mad? You hit one of the Count's prize horses and we're dead man!

ICEMAN 1

But what's a damn cobra doin' in the middle of a horse barn?

ICEMAN 2

I don't know, but I don't plan to stick around and find out, alright?

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE IN)

NARRATOR

Next: With the Icemen in hot pursuit, Cassie, Jet, Sly and Memyselfandi are forced to cross a perilous river to escape. But there's something very wrong on the far side and it's making them sick!

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)