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**Chapter 12**  
**The Far Side**

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

**NARRATOR (V.O)**

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.  
Chapter 12: The Far Side.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

**Scene One: Ext., outside the Count's mansion – Night.**

SOUND: crickets + crowd commotion

**SLY**

Head for the trees!

**CASSIE**

What about Memyselfandi?

**SLY**

Forget about him, the Icemen are coming!

SOUND: (FootstepsRunning.4)

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**NARRATOR**

Cassie ran across the lawn then jumped up and down and waved her arms outside the ballroom window. Memyselfandi saw her out there and waddled onto the terrace. Cassie, holding Jet tight, waved.

**CASSIE**

Follow me!

**NARRATOR**

All four of them dashed into a dark grove of trees.

**Scene Two: Ext., in woods surrounding Count's mansion – Night.**

SOUND: Footsteps running, bushes rustling, crickets

**NARRATOR (cont.)**

Apart from Jet, who had excellent night vision, it was hard to see in the dark. Cassie set her down to lead the way. When Jet got too far ahead Cassie called and Jet meowed in response. By following the sound of Jet's meows they made their way through the dark woods until they came to a river.

SOUND: flowing water

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Oh bother, now what?

SOUND: jungle night

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**CASSIE**

How far is it to the other side?

**NARRATOR**

Memyselfandi reached into his vest pocket and pulled out his Swiper.

SOUND: electronic bleep

**MEMYSELFANDI**

The river at this point is 961 v wide.

**SLY**

How does that thing know where we are?

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Kinematic GPS, of course.

**SLY**

Does it tell you where the closest bridge is?

SOUND: electronic bleep

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Hmmm. Twenty-six penta south-southeast.

**SLY**

If we jump in right here and swim across we can lose the Icemen

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because they'll only cross at a bridge.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

How can you be so sure?

**SLY**

The Icemen won't go far without their Rovers. That's where they keep all their equipment—weapons, computers, remote sensing devices, infrared ultratrackers—the works.

**CASSIE**

Then let's do it!

**MEMYSELFANDI** (desperate)

I can't swim!

**SLY**

I can!

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Well bully for you, but how exactly does that help *me*?

**SLY**

You can stay behind, you fit right in with the Narsies anyway.

**CASSIE**

C'mon! If we cross right now we'll get a good jump on the Icemen!

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**MEMYSELFANDI**

There's absolutely no way I'm going to jump into that river!

**SLY**

OK, well, nice knowing you, egghead.

**CASSIE**

Wait! Wait! Sly, can you swim really well?

**SLY**

Ever see a water moccasin glide through a swamp? It's a thing of beauty!

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Yes well, to a snake, maybe, but to me, it's a thing of horror!

**CASSIE**

Listen: how about this? Sly jumps in the water, I hold onto his tail with one hand and with my other, I hold your hand. That way Sly can swim us all over to the far side!

**SLY**

What about Jet?

**CASSIE**

Jet's a super good swimmer. Don't worry, she'll keep up with us.

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**SLY**

Well, I said I can swim, I didn't say I'm a beast of burden.

**CASSIE**

I don't weigh much. And Memyselfandi is just egg white and yolk. Plus, we'll be in the water so it'll be easy for you to pull us along, like a tug boat!

**MEMYSELFANDI**

If I hit a rock in the water I'll break my shell! Or if you let go of me I'll drown!

**SLY**

I say we lose egghead here and dive in the river while we have a chance.

**CASSIE**

We can't just leave him here!

**SLY**

Why not? He's only an egg!

**CASSIE**

He saved us from the Narsies! We'd probably be in jail if Memyselfandi hadn't translated for us!

SOUND: Rover motors revving

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**CASSIE**

The Icemen!

MUSIC: (IcemenPursuit)

SOUND: motors revving

**NARRATOR**

All four scrambled down the embankment.

SOUND: shuffling feet, motors revving

**NARRATOR (cont.)**

Sly slid into the water, spiralled around and flicked his tail out for Cassie to grab. Memyselfandi hesitated on the shore. Cassie took hold of his hand and dragged him into the water.

**ICEMEN**

Halt!

SOUND: rapid bursts from shock blaster, splashing water

**NARRATOR**

Sly plunged underwater and darted out into the swift current.

SOUND: rapid bursts from shock blaster

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MUSIC: (Icemen pursuit)

**Scene Three: Ext., on the far side of the river – Night.**

**NARRATOR**

The current was stronger than expected. When they landed on the far side it was four v downstream. The first thing they noticed in the darkness was a loud buzzing sound.

MUSIC: (ElectricTubes-F.mp4)

**CASSIE**

What *is* that?

**SLY**

I don't know, but something's glowing up there.

**NARRATOR**

The shoreline was a dark, steep embankment about 10 'd high, topped with an even darker mass of black bush. Beyond the bush was an eerie glow, a blue-green shimmer like the Northern Lights, and the buzzing seemed to come from there as well.

Cassie started climbing up the embankment.

SOUND: Footsteps, foliage rustling

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Where the devil are you going Cassie?

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**CASSIE**

To see what's up there.

SOUND: Footsteps, foliage rustling

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Is everything OK up there? . . . I say, is everything OK up there?

MUSIC: (ElectricTubes-F.mp4)

**SLY**

Hey, why don't you climb up there and see what's going on?

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Why don't *you* climb up there?

**SLY**

Because that's a very steep incline, not my strong point, climbing uphill.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Well it's not my strong point either.

**SLY**

What *is* your strong point, eggman?

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**MEMYSELFANDI**

Thinking. Unlike yours.

**SLY**

Thinking of yourself you mean, that's all you ever think about.

**NARRATOR**

Cassie came sliding down the embankment.

SOUND: rustling footsteps

**CASSIE**

You've got to see this! I don't know what it is but it's really weird!

MUSIC: (ElectricTubes-E.mp4)

**NARRATOR**

With a lot of huffing and puffing and backsliding Sly and Memyselfandi climbed to the top of the embankment.

SOUND: rustling footsteps

**CASSIE**

Over here!

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**NARRATOR**

Sly and Memyselfandi followed the sound of her voice then saw her silhouette lit up from behind by the blue-green glow. They saw what she was pointing at: a broad and flat expanse like an airport runway. But instead of a landing strip for airplanes there were endless rows of giant white vats buried in the ground.

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MUSIC: (ElectricTubes-E.mp4)

**NARRATOR (cont.)**

Each vat contained a swarm of writhing snake-like tubes of all sizes. Some were tiny and sheer like spider web filaments. Others were worm-size, while others were longer and thicker, graduating in sizes like garter snakes, rattle snakes and pythons. Some were as huge as anacondas and others were even bigger, larger than any snake, the size of industrial conduits, railway tunnels. But all of them were squirming and writhing and glowed with the strange blue-green light they'd seen from the river's edge.

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MUSIC: (ElectricTubes-F.mp4)

**CASSIE**

I feel dizzy.

**MEMYSELFANDI (shouting)**

What?

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**SLY**

We should get out of here.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Yes, but how? It looks like glowing snakes as far as the eye can see.

**SLY**

We can jump back in the river and float downstream.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

I will *not* go back into that freezing river.

**SLY**

You'd rather stay here? I don't know about you but these things are giving me a headache.

**NARRATOR**

Memyselfandi didn't want to admit it but he wasn't feeling well either.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Hmmm . . . I wonder if it's the chain arrays.

**CASSIE**

What's that?

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Chain arrays are controversial. Critics say they emit electromagnetic frequencies that can cause health problems.

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**SLY**

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

**MEMYSELFANDI**

I had nothing but time on my hands so I perused the network on my Swiper and learned all sorts of things. For instance, proponents of chain arrays claim that the denser the array the greater the concentration of propagating fibers. That means accelerated fractionating, which produces more energy.

**SLY**

Yeah well, I'm with the critics, 'cause I feel like pukin'!

**NARRATOR**

Memyselfandi pulled out his Swiper again.

SOUND: electronic bleep

**MEMYSELFANDI**

The thing about the network is, you can find opinions for or against anything. The official Empire site says the chain arrays are a 'proud example of bleeding edge technology enabled by a forward thinking collaboration between private enterprise and the Empire.'

MUSIC: (ElectricTubes-F.mp4)

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**SLY**

Yeah, of course they're gonna say that.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

However, certain unofficial sites—the so-called back channels—say that super dense concentrations of interlinked chain arrays pose serious threats to nearby residents and wildlife. Rumors of increased birth defects, higher than average cancer rates and bizarre genetic mutations abound.

**NARRATOR**

Cassie was trying to think of another way—other than jumping in the river—to get out of there. As she pondered, a sound—different from the buzzing chain arrays—grew louder.

SOUND: locomotive (fade in)

**NARRATOR (cont.)**

This sound was lower, deeper, more like thunder. And the louder it got the more they could feel it in the ground, especially Sly, as his belly lay in the dirt.

**CASSIE**

What is that?

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Not an earthquake, I hope.

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**CASSIE**

No, I mean, what is *that*?

**NARRATOR**

Cassie pointed to the horizon. A bright yellow ball was floating into view. As the thunder sound grew louder the yellow light grew closer and brighter.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Is that a train?

**NARRATOR**

And sure enough, when it was close enough to see through the haze of the glowing chain arrays, there it was: a long line of industrial tank cars, flatbed, gondolas and boxcars pulled by a massive engine crowned with a brilliant yellow lamp.

The train gradually slowed, then stopped.

SOUND: hissing

**NARRATOR (cont.)**

Vacuum seals popped open the lids on top of tank cars. Then long, snaking tubes unravelled from within the tank cars and spilled down into the white vats of the chain arrays.

**SLY**

What's happening?

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**MEMYSELFANDI**

It appears to be some sort of fuelling operation.

**CASSIE**

Maybe we should hop onto one of those boxcars and hitch a ride before the train leaves.

**SLY**

Yeah but, who knows where this train is going?

**CASSIE**

It's gonna go somewhere, and somewhere is better than here.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

There's a good chance this train is heading to Aspire because that's where they burn the most fuel.

**SLY**

I don't know, what if this train takes us right back to the Icemen?

**CASSIE**

Or what if it takes us straight to Aspire? Wherever it goes has to be better than being stuck here getting sicker by the minute.

**NARRATOR**

Sly had doubts but his headache was only getting worse. In fact, by now they all had headaches and felt dizzy and nauseous. The hope of

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getting away from whatever was making them feel so awful made them do it. They came up to the train and walked alongside it till they found an open boxcar. Cassie put Jet inside, then asked Memyselfandi to help her lift Sly up and put him on the boxcar floor.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Why can't we just leave him behind? He's only a cold-blooded snake-in-the-grass!

**CASSIE**

Please, you two! Stop your stupid fighting and let's get out of here!

SOUND: locomotive (fade in)

**NARRATOR**

Next: Hopping a mystery train may be the quickest way to escape, but where is the train headed?

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE IN)

SOUND: train slow, then accelerating

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[ end Chapter 12 ]