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Chapter 13

Vagabonds

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR (V.O)

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.
Chapter 13: Vagabonds.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: Int., boxcar speeding along railroad tracks – Day.

SOUND: Train rolling down tracks

NARRATOR

The train was speeding so fast Cassie saw nothing but a blur through the crack in the door. Apart from the bright sunbeam the rest of the boxcar was dark. But she could see Sly, coiled in a mound, sleeping soundly. And she wished she had a camera for this sight: Jet, also sound asleep, curled up on top of Sly. In a corner where she could barely see him but easily heard him, Memyselfandi snored like a lumberjack.

Now that Cassie was up and about, Jet woke up too. She yawned a big sleepy yawn and stretched.

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SLY

Hey! Easy on the skin cat, I ain't no scratchin' post!

CASSIE

Sorry Sly, Jet forgets about her claws.

SLY

Yeah, well, cats ain't the brightest creatures are they?

CASSIE

Hey! Be nice.

MEMYSELFANDI

What's going on here? Where are we?

SLY

You tell us, Casey Jones. You're the one who said this train would take us to the Pinnacle of Aspire.

MEMYSELFANDI

I said the likelihood is high, I didn't make any promises.

CASSIE

Well, being on this train is better than where we were. But I do wonder where we are now.

NARRATOR

Cassie went over to the door to open it wider. It was heavy and

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barely budged so she leaned into it and pushed hard. The door slid open, letting in a great gust of wind.

SOUND: grunt of exertion (Cassie); metal door sliding open, wind gust

MEMYSELFANDI

Good grief! Are you trying to get us killed? Shut that bloody door!

SLY

Hey relax, egghead! A little fresh air ain't gonna kill you!

MEMYSELFANDI

No, but a wind-tossed cinder could crack my shell. Then where would I be?

SLY (chuckling)

Prob'ly all over the floor, yolk and all!

MEMYSELFANDI (sniffing)

Yes, exactly!

SLY

Then the rest of us could enjoy a nice omelette! And we wouldn't have to hear your whining anymore!

CASSIE

Sly! Memyselfandi! Will you two please stop bickering? We have to

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figure out what to do now! First help me with this door.

NARRATOR

Sly and Memyselfandi grumbled but came over and did their best to push the door back so it wasn't wide open.

SOUND: metal door sliding open ✓

NARRATOR (cont.)

Sly poked his head out the crack in the door and looked around.

SLY

Huh—desert—go figure!

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi didn't want to get too close to the door so he hunkered behind Cassie, checking his Swiper.

SOUND: electronic bleep

MEMYSELFANDI

The Adelson Desert! How extraordinary!

CASSIE

Does that mean we're getting closer to the Pinnacle of Aspire?

MEMYSELFANDI

(Staring at his Swiper, swiping through a series of maps)

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Hmmm...not necessarily. Sly, what did you see when you poked your head out the door?

SLY

A whole lotta nothin'. Oh—and a sign on the door which I couldn't read it 'cause it's written in gibberish.

MEMYSELFANDI

Hmmm, we need to know what that sign says.

SLY

Why?

MEMYSELFANDI

It could be important information.

CASSIE

Hey, does your Swiper take pictures?

MEMYSELFANDI

Yes, of course.

CASSIE

Give me your Swiper. I'll lean outside and take a picture. Then maybe you can tell us what the sign says.

MEMYSELFANDI

Well, just don't drop my Swiper, whatever you do.

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NARRATOR

All the tree climbing Cassie had done in the past prepared her well for this challenge. She held tightly onto the door latch with her left hand, leaned far out, and with her right hand steadied the Swiper over the sign and snapped a picture.

SOUND: wind, train, camera shutter click

NARRATOR (cont.)

Then she swung back into the boxcar and handed the Swiper to Memyselfandi who looked at the image and frowned.

MEMYSELFANDI

Hmmm...it's Corporese, not my strongest language.

CASSIE

But can you read it?

MEMYSELFANDI

I can get the gist of it. It's a warning.

CASSIE

A warning about what?

MEMYSELFANDI

It says: [clears throat] Authorized personnel only permitted on board Empire Rail Services. Any unauthorized persons apprehended on ERS

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property or equipment shall be arrested and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Vagrants, vagabonds, indigents and trespassers shall be tried under suspicion of industrial espionage, punishable by fines and/or prison sentences up to and including erasure, discorporation, prolonged torture and death by agony.

SLY

I don't like the sound of that.

CASSIE

Me neither.

MUSIC: (FreightTrainRollin-wAirways-080520.aif)

SOUND: train rolling rhythmically on tracks

NARRATOR

The train sped along. Memyselfandi was trying to estimate how far they had travelled. He guessed that the train was moving around 150 v per hera, and that 14 heras or so had passed since they climbed on-board. That meant they were well into the Adelson Desert, fast approaching the Koax Mountains which separated the desert basin from the fertile valleys of the coastal plain. Fourteen heras was a long time for a train to travel; soon it would have to refuel.

SOUND: train rolling rhythmically on tracks

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NARRATOR (cont.)

The train rolled on and on. And even though they'd slept through most of the night, the hypnotic sounds of the train lulled them, and they all grew heavy-headed and nodded off....

SOUND: train rolling rhythmically on tracks

MUSIC: (FreightTrainRollin-wAirways-080520.aif)

Scene Two: Ext., railway freight yard – Night.

SOUND: Train air horn, squealing wheels

NARRATOR

The train's hissing air brakes and squealing wheels startled them awake. It was too dark to see anything inside the boxcar.

MEMYSELFANDI

Where the Devil are we?

NARRATOR

Through the gap in the boxcar door Cassie saw stars twinkling in the black sky above. She swept Jet up in her arm and scooted out the door.

SOUND: metal door sliding

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NARRATOR

Once on the ground she set Jet down, then reached up and took hold of Sly.

CASSIE

C'mon Sly, I'll give you a hand. Memyselfandi! C'mon, it's your turn. Climb down—quickly!

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi peered out the boxcar door trying to guess the height, doubting that Cassie would be strong enough to carry his weight and certain that Sly wouldn't even try.

MEMYSELFANDI

I don't think this will work.

SLY (whispering)

Psst! Cassie! Someone's coming!

SOUND: footsteps in gravel, male voices approaching

NARRATOR

Cassie glanced under the gap below the train and saw the legs of several men approaching.

SLY

Cassie!

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NARRATOR

Sly was nodding his head at a step ladder leaning against a metal shed. Cassie ran over, grabbed the step ladder, then ran back to the train. She leaned the ladder against the boxcar.

CASSIE

Memyselfandi, you have two seconds to get down this ladder!

NARRATOR

To everyone's surprise—especially himself—Memyselfandi climbed down the step ladder and made it to the ground without breaking his shell.

WATCHMAN

Hey—Who's there? Identify yourselves or we'll shoot!

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE IN)

NARRATOR

Next: Cassie, Jet, Sly and Memyselfandi meet another strange creature who promises them he can help.

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 13]