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Chapter 23: We Did It to Survive

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.
Chapter 23: We Did It to Survive.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: Int. Regional Detention Center. Day.

SOUND: Fluorescent light buzz, footsteps approaching

GUARD 1

Don't let the dark girl's size fool you. Rumour has it she has a vicious body guard.

NARRATOR

Two guards approached Cassie's holding cell.

SOUND: Jailer's keys, padlock unlocking

NARRATOR (cont.)

One guard seized Cassie while the other jabbed a syringe into Jet's neck.

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SOUND: Cassie struggles, cat hiss

CASSIE (alarmed)

Hey! What are you doing?

NARRATOR (cont.)

Jet went limp and the guard stuffed her into a metal cage.

SOUND: cage rattling

CASSIE

Where are you taking her?

GUARD 1 (menacingly)

Your attack animal will be held until you've made your deposition statement. No need to worry.

CASSIE

She's not an attack animal, what's wrong with you?

SOUND: Lock locking, cell door slamming.

MUSIC: (ominous)

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Scene Two: Int. Tribunal chamber. Day.

SOUND: fluorescent buzz

NARRATOR

They removed Cassie's blindfold only after she was seated in the tribunal chamber so she couldn't have seen the passage on the way there. The chamber was mostly featureless. Plain white walls held an array of video and audio recording equipment. One wall was dominated by a large rectangular mirror, the one-way type found in police interrogation cells. Cassie wondered who was on the other side of the mirror, invisible, and staring at her.

An elderly man wearing small oval spectacles turned and spoke.

ELDERLY MAN

In accordance with the laws of the Empire you have been remanded to questioning by your superiors. Your examination panel consists of five experts: an Immigration Officer, a Truant Officer, a child psychologist, a criminologist and an exterminator.

CASSIE

Exterminator?

ELDERLY MAN

Silence! You are not authorized to ask questions.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

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NARRATOR

Cassie looked from one panelist to the next. The exterminator was most disturbing, sitting stock still, draped in olive green overalls and wearing what looked like a welder's mask with a visor of opaque black glass blocking even the slightest glimpse of his eyes.

CRIMINOLOGIST

First of all—the portable data device you arrived with—from whom did you steal it?

CASSIE

I didn't steal it! Queen Mavis gave it to me!

SOUND: outcry of crowd ("You lie!")

NARRATOR

The elderly man with the spectacles turned to a woman in a navy blue jumper with a prim white collar.

ELDERLY MAN

How do you, as the child psychologist, evaluate the suspect's credibility?

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

Her eyes dart shiftily. Her fingers flex nervously. Our proximal sensors indicate accelerated heart rate and increased blood pressure, all signs that she is lying.

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CASSIE

I'm NOT lying! If you give me back my necklace I can show you the hologram of Queen Mavis handing it to me.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

NARRATOR

The Immigration Officer stood up and asked Cassie,

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Where do you come from?

CASSIE

Osborn, North Dakota.

ELDERLY MAN

There is no such jurisdiction in the Empire.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

And how did you get here?

CASSIE

We crossed the Sea of Opacity in a megadinka.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

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ELDERLY MAN (shouting)

Objection! Fanciful tales are inadmissible in these proceedings.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

You are aware, are you not, that it is physically impossible to cross the Sea of Opacity?

CASSIE

All I know is we climbed into the megadinka and it flew over the Sea of Opacity. We drifted for a long time and everyone thought we were lost but eventually we landed on the beach here.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

Indeed. And what is this *megadinka* you speak of?

CASSIE

It's like a giant kite. We got it from the Skirlings.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

The Skirlings, you say.

CASSIE

Yes. The Skirlings are a desert tribe who took us in, fed us, then were going to kill us.

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SOUND: hubbub among crowd

NARRATOR

The child psychologist leaned and whispered to the elderly man. Then she stood up and approached Cassie.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

How old are you?

CASSIE

Ten.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

And would you say you have a very active imagination?

CASSIE

Yes.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

I see. And do you think it's possible that these so-called Skirlings may be a product of your imagination?

CASSIE

No.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

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CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

Really? How can you be sure?

CASSIE

Because Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam saw them too.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

And these are the other interlopers seized along with you?

CASSIE

Yes.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

And do they also come from—where is it you said—Osgoode?

CASSIE

Osborn. And no, I met them on the way here.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

Go on.

NARRATOR

And so Cassie told them how and where she met Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam. It took a long time to tell the whole story because they kept interrupting with questions. They had so many objections and stopped

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continually to confer among themselves before proceeding with more questions.

The Truant Officer stood up and asked,

TRUANT OFFICER

In which training facility are you enrolled?

CASSIE

Training facility? You mean where do I go to school?

TRUANT OFFICER

Yes, if you like, where do you go to school?

CASSIE

Henry Kissinger Elementary.

TRUANT OFFICER (scoffing)

There's no such institution registered within the Empire.

CRIMINOLOGIST

She's lying again.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

Her lying appears to be compulsive, possibly pathological.

NARRATOR

The child psychologist leaned over and whispered to the criminologist. After a brief consultation, the child psychologist

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turned to Cassie and asked,

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

Whose idea was it to steal the megadinka?

CASSIE

We didn't steal it! The Skirlings were going to chop our heads off so Memyselfandi got a dinka to help us escape.

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

So you're saying that Memyselfandi stole it.

CASSIE

No, he didn't *steal* it! The Skirlings were going to kill us so he used it to get away!

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

I don't know how you define stealing in Osborn—or wherever it is you're really from—but in the Empire, stealing is when someone takes property belonging to someone else without their permission. So according to the law, you—or Memyselfandi—stole Skirling property.

CASSIE

But they were going to kill us! It was escape or die! We did it to

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survive!

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST

Indeed. Do you realize that is the lamest excuse of the common killer? *I did it to survive!* Furthermore, why should we believe that these so-called *Skirlings* were trying to kill you? Do you have even one shred of evidence to prove this libellous claim?

SOUND: hubbub among crowd

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE IN)

NARRATOR

Next: Memyselfandi is brought before the tribunal where his loyalty will be severely tested.

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 23]