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Chapter 25: His Very Nature

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.
Chapter 25: His Very Nature.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: Int. Regional Detention Center. Day.

SOUND: Fluorescent light buzz

NARRATOR

So many in Aspire were so afraid of Sly they built a special cage to hold him, a cage he could never possibly escape. It was 10-feet high, 8-feet long, 3-feet wide, and made of 4-inch thick glass. It looked like a giant terrarium covered by a heavy steel mesh plate to prevent him from crawling out.

SOUND: footsteps approaching

NARRATOR (cont.)

Two men approached the cage. One was a guard holding a machine gun, the other was a herpetologist, or snake handler, who carried a 10-

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foot pole with a loop on the end. The herpetologist struck the pole against the glass wall of the cage, disturbing Sly.

SOUND: pole striking glass, snake hiss

TURTOX

In all my time here I have never taken deposition statement from snake. Since there is no precedent for this, I do not have to follow protocol. After all, many of us believe talking snake is, by definition, monster, therefore not only undeserving of legal process, but should, in fact, be destroyed. I trust you grasp gravity of situation?

SLY

I know a threat when I hear one.

TURTOX

You do not know half of it. Of course, you have no reason to trust me. But what you do not realize is you cannot trust so-called friends either.

NARRATOR

Sly tried to keep his eye on the herpetologist who paced around the cage as he spoke.

SOUND: footsteps

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TURTOX

Our objective is to determine which one of you offers most value. If you offer no value you will be terminated. And just so you know, our investigation leads us to believe that you—snake—are highly expendable.

NARRATOR (cont.)

The herpetologist pressed his face against the glass wall of the cage.

SOUND: snake hiss

NARRATOR (cont.)

Sly struck at him but hit the wall.

TURTOX (laughing)

See that monitor on wall? Consider the evidence we have against you: a videotape made by your fellow traveler, Memyselfandi.

NARRATOR

The herpetologist picked up a remote control device, aimed it at the monitor and clicked.

SOUND: Computer blip

NARRATOR (cont.)

The monitor lit up, showing Memyselfandi speaking to an interviewer. Sly grew restless in his cage, bristling every time Memyselfandi

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spoke.

MEMYSELFANDI

Personally, I abhor snakes! Have you ever seen one slither through the grass, pounce on a mouse and devour it whole? It's absolutely ghastly!

NARRATOR

It wasn't only *what* Memyselfandi said that got to Sly, but *how* he said it: leaning back in his chair, fat fingers laced over his fat belly, pontificating like a smug Oxford don.

MEMYSELFANDI

They're all grotesque, if you ask me, even the so-called *harmless* ones. And don't get me started on the creepy ones: Big fat pythons that swallow pigs and children whole!

SLY

Oh come off it! Where does he get his information, the tabloids?

MEMYSELFANDI

Boa constrictors squeezing the life out of innocent little fawns!

SLY

Enough!

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MEMYSELFANDI

And the venomous ones! Vipers, rattlesnakes, copperheads, water moccasins—the whole lot of them—toxic by nature! I ask you: What kind of devilish beast poisons its prey?

SLY

Listen to that egghead fool!

MEMYSELFANDI

You know, many religions depict the serpent as the Devil's creature. The serpent tempting Liana in Paradise. Have you ever wondered why it wasn't a puppy tempting Liana? Because we wouldn't believe it! But a snake? Yes, a snake probably would do that—destroy peace and harmony, ruin the lives of countless generations just for the hell of it. Well, I can certainly see that.

MUSIC: (OminousSnakeRising-190619)

SLY (hissing)

Ssssss....

MEMYSELFANDI

Have you ever seen a cobra stand up to its full height? The way it fixates on its victim, stares right into its eyes and just floats back and forth hypnotizing the poor thing? Bad enough it has to strike its victim with merciless speed, injecting its fangs in the poor sod's face, pumping toxic venom into the hapless soul's

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bloodstream. On top of all that it just floats there, hovering, terrorizing its victim! The victim knows it's doomed but the perverse cobra heartlessly draws out the torture, prolonging the terror until many of its victims drop dead from sheer heart attacks! That's no creature of the Lord, I assure you. Those damn snakes come straight from Hell, and as far as I'm concerned, they can go straight back there!

SLY

Alright, alright, enough already! You've made your point. But so what? Memyselfandi is totally unreliable. Consider the source. Did you know that Memyselfandi is a traitor? A weakling? A conniving scoundrel that would sell his family if he thought he might gain by it?

TURTOX

That is serious allegation. But can you prove this?

SLY

Hey look, I trust my instincts, and I had a bad feeling about that Eggman the second I met him.

TURTOX

Instincts are inadmissible. We need evidence.

SLY

Evidence? Listen, he admitted to being stuck up on that damn wall for

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years! What kind of person gives up so easily? I mean, he didn't even *try* to get down! Instead, he turns to that damn Swiper of his and spends countless hours—years—staring at that blasted screen as if it's real.

TURTOX

Using Swiper hardly makes one traitor.

SLY

He's a traitor because he stole a Skirling megadinka and took off in it alone!

TURTOX

He testified he was on his way to rescue you and your friends.

SLY

Yeah, of course he did. But we all saw him flying away by himself. The only reason he stopped for us is because we saw him and then he had to stop or risk our vengeance if we ever caught up with him.

TURTOX

Your word against his. Why should we believe you?

SLY

Because Memyselfandi can't be trusted. When the Narsie guards brought us to the Count, Memyselfandi got all cozy with him, boasting that he was the only one who spoke Narsi.

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TURTOX

But if you do not understand Narsi, how can you claim Memyselfandi 'cozied up,' as you say, to the Count?

SLY

C'mon, it was obvious. The Count treated Cassie like a slave and me like vermin. But he was all chummy with Memyselfandi, laughing at his jokes, trading stories, putting his arm around him like they were long lost friends—sickening, if you ask me.

TURTOX (impatient)

Idle speculation and how you say, SOUR GRAPES! This is legal proceeding. Your personal grudges have no place in formal court of law.

SLY

And he's a shirker too. Anytime we had to do anything difficult or dangerous, Memyselfandi was full of excuses: *Oh I can't swim because I might drown; I can't climb off the train for fear of breaking my precious shell; I can't build a campfire because I might scramble my yolk!* He's useless. A freeloader. A cowardly, weak, over-indulged Egghead!

TURTOX

Mere opinions. We need facts. Who was behind murder of Crow's brother?

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SLY

Hah? I have no idea what you're talking about.

TURTOX

Spare us innocent act. It is hard enough to take talking snake; *lying* snake will not be tolerated.

SLY

Hey, you've already judged me guilty. This is a kangaroo court. Judge, jury and executioner all in one. Why should I even—

TURTOX (angry, intolerant)

Shut your lying mouth! I was warned of your impertinence. If you value your life and that of your pathetic fellows you will keep your tongue in mouth. You will answer my questions only in clear and direct replies and you will address every one of us with utmost deference and respect. Is. That. Understood.

MUSIC: (OminousSnakeRising-190619)

SOUND: snake hissing

TURTOX (taking a deep breath)

Now, once again, tell us exactly what happened when your friend, the dark girl, appeared in her massive yellow lorry and destroyed Crow's brother.

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NARRATOR

Sly could see how this would go: no matter what he said or how many times he repeated it, they would *never* accept anything unless he betrayed Cassie or confessed his own guilt. But he refused. Instead, he repeated slowly and clearly the truth as he understood it.

SLY

As I said, I did not meet Cassie until she came to the River Orange. She never mentioned killing anyone, and I don't believe she ever did, or frankly ever could, if it came down to it.

NARRATOR

The herpetologist looked at the armed guard and shook his head.

TURTOX

This is pointless. Unless we enhance interrogation techniques, this snake will always lie. Lying is the essence of its very nature. Take him away.

MUSIC: *Blizzard Theme (FADE IN)*

NARRATOR

Next: Assam is brought before the tribunal. And while testifying, one of his statements unintentionally changes everything.

MUSIC: *Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)*