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Chapter 27: A Very Simple Test

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.
Chapter 27: A Very Simple Test.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: Int. Ministry of Omniscience administration building.

Night.

SOUND: Fluorescent light buzz

MALWAL (throwing his Swiper onto the desk, enraged)
What do we pay you for? You've had that cursed data drive for how
long and you still can't open it?

901 (clearing her throat)

Sir, biometrics-encoded encryption is particularly challenging.

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MALWAL

I don't pay you to make excuses! I pay you for solutions! What. Is. Your. Solution?

901

Well sir, one possible solution involves a very simple test.

MALWAL

What 'simple test'?

901

We can test the girl's claim that Queen Mavis actually gave her the data drive.

MALWAL

Have you lost your mind? You're seriously considering the rantings of a pathological liar?

901

Well it's easy enough to prove, sir. Either the girl can open the data drive or she can't.

MALWAL

Listen, if she can open the data drive, that means Queen Mavis reencrypted it with the girl's biometrics.

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901

Yes sir, precisely.

MALWAL

Why in the name of Primus would she do that?

901

So the data drive could be opened if and when the girl ever got it to the Emperor.

MALWAL

Now that's insane! Why would Queen Mavis take such a risk with a child? It would be a desperate gamble.

901

Maybe she *was* desperate.

MALWAL

She's the Queen of Inthalassa! Couldn't she find some other way to get that drive to the Emperor?

901

Sir, I'm surprised you, of all people, have to ask that question.

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MALWAL (grumbles something unintelligible and storms off...)

MUSIC: (foreboding)

Scene Two: Int. Ministry of Omniscience, encryption lab. Night.

901 (urgently picking up the phone)

Sir, you really need to get down here and see this. Like, now!

NARRATOR

Within two cycles Dezbin, Karkin and Malwal were huddled around 901's work station as she opened the files on the bio-encrypted data drive.

DEZBIN (amazed)

How'd you crack the code?

901

I didn't, Cassie did.

KARKIN (incredulous)

That little dark girl?

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901

Yeah. Turns out she was telling the truth about Queen Mavis giving her the data drive.

MALWAL

I can't believe it.

901

Well, believe THIS.

NARRATOR

901 swiped over a file labeled **Coupdegrace**, and enlarged the view.

MALWAL (incredulous)

What the—

DEZBIN (panicking)

How did the Crow find out?

901

Well that's beside the point now. The question is, how do we stop him before he drops this bomb?

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MALWAL

Vaporize him. Take him and his whole compound out. Hell, take the whole bloody realm out if we have to.

KARKIN

No. We do that and suddenly he's a martyr. He'll go from 10 thousand followers to 10 million overnight.

MALWAL

So what's your plan?

KARKIN

Pull his plug. Make sure the Emperor's fingerprints are nowhere to be found.

Scene Three: Int. Ministry of Omniscience, Security Council bunker.

Night.

MUSIC: (Martial)

NARRATOR

Each one of the Security Council members had been notified that they

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would be escorted to an undisclosed location, and each had to wear a blindfold during transit.

When their blindfolds were removed they saw they were in the "bunker," so called because it was built with lead-lined walls and buried deep below the sub-basement. Banks of electromagnetic sensors--RF, microwave--quantum--scanned each member as they crossed the threshold to ensure that no one had smuggled in a recording device.

SOUND: electronic bleeps

NARRATOR (cont.)

Only essential personnel were summoned, a select group of the Emperor's most trusted advisors, along with the necessary technical experts. One of these tech experts was 901, the coder leading the team tasked with hacking Cassie's data drive.

901

Sir, the problem we have now, is that all updates to the Crow's plan are locked into a daisy-chain protocol: only two devices are authorized to receive and store updates, and both of them are biometrically encrypted. The Crow himself has one, and the other was issued to his brother, Donald Ducas.

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MALWAL (flustered)

Which is the one that Queen Mavis reencoded with the girl's biometrics. Well, that one won't update now that its biometric code has been changed.

901

That's true--ordinarily. But somehow the Queen hacked the code so it mimics the overwritten biometrics. So when a decoder scans the drive it misreads the girl's biometrics as Ducas's.

MALWAL

How is that even possible?

901

I wish I knew, sir. The Queen obviously has resources we know nothing about.

MALWAL

For the love of Primus! If I understand you, that damn girl is the only one who can get the info we need--the who what when and where--if she unlocks the drive inside the Crow's operations center! And that would mean breaking into the Crow's fortress!

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901

That's exactly the situation, sir.

MALWAL

So we're dead in the water! There's no way that kid can get into the Crow's op center.

901

Well sir, my team has come up with a plan. It sounds crazy but it just may work.

MALWAL

Forget it. I haven't even heard your plan but I know where you're going with it. And yes, it is crazy. And no, it won't work! Martyr or no, I'm going to order a full preemptive strike. The Crow may gain ten million followers but they'll all be living in the Stone Age by the time I'm through with them.

901

The thing is sir, the Emperor has already approved our plan.

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MALWAL

Huh? What the hell are you talking about?

901

Now that we've learned the dark girl is telling the truth about Queen Mavis and the data drive, and now that we've seen what's on that drive the Emperor has given us the go-ahead.

MALWAL

This is insanity, it can't possibly work!

901

Sir, the Emperor said if our plan works, everyone wins except the Crow. And if it doesn't, then we'll consider the nuclear option. But that will mean ... everyone ... loses.

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE IN)

NARRATOR

Next: A new plan is afoot, and Cassie, Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam must be trained and specially equipped to carry it off.

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 27]