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## Chapter 28: The SED

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

### NARRATOR

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.

Chapter 28: The SED.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

**Scene One: Int. Ministry of Omniscience administration building.**

**Night.**

MUSIC: Martial-drill-JH-a-040622.aif

SOUND: Lab-tubular merged

### NARRATOR

During the tribunals the four strangers were split up so each had to face interrogation alone. But now that the Ministry of Omniscience had okayed their mission, Cassie, Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam were allowed--encouraged even--to spend time together again. The reason? To pull off their plan, teamwork would be absolutely essential

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because the plan was not only brazen, it was complex. Each player had a unique role and would have to know exactly how that role fit in with the others'.

One afternoon the four of them were summoned to the Special Equipment Dispensary, or SED.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Well, they're certainly treating us differently now that we've been given the green light.

**ASSAM**

They're finally treating us decently 'cause they know we're gonna die trying to pull it off.

**SLY**

That's your assumption, not necessarily anyone else's.

**ASSAM**

Is it? Then how come they call our plan 'the suicide mission'?

**SLY**

Mind games. They're testing you. They know words are powerful so they choose words to test your mettle. They say 'suicide mission' enough times and you start thinking it. Words create thoughts, thoughts

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create actions. Problem is, you start thinking 'suicide mission' too much you're gonna start acting suicide mission. Now, if you wanna check out early that's your personal choice. But don't drag the innocent along with you. You wanna be responsible for getting a little girl killed?

**NARRATOR**

All his life Assam had known nothing but loyalty to his masters. He'd always served them well, hauling jitneys loaded with lignite, pulling wagons of paving stones, climbing mountain passes, trudging across deserts and tundra, a faithful stoic carrying out his duties with humble forbearance. It's what he did, what he felt he was born to do: loyally serve his master. When his masters were fair and kind, spared him the rod, took care of his simple needs--modest food and clean water--then Assam was always happy to serve.

**ASSAM**

Of course I don't want to let Cassie down, Sly, you're absolutely right.

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**Scene Two: Int. Special Equipment Dispensary. Day.**

MUSIC: John Adams: The Chairman Dances

SOUND: Lab-ambience-synthy

**QUINTILIANIS**

Welcome to the Special Equipment Dispensary or, as we call it, The SED. Now. You've all been apprised of the plan to defeat the Crow. You know the risks. And, in the unlikely event that you succeed, our most beneficent Emperor shall grant you each your truest deepest wish.

**NARRATOR**

Quintilianis glanced at each of the Strangers.

**QUINTILIANIS**

However. Never underestimate the enormity of the challenge that lies before you. Even if everything goes perfectly according to plan you have ZERO chance of succeeding.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

What?

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**NARRATOR**

Cassie, Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam looked dumbfounded, precisely the reaction Quintilianis intended.

**QUINTILIANIS**

But--once you are issued the following special equipment, your chance of succeeding will increase to perhaps one, maybe even two percent.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Two percent? Why, that's suicide!

**ASSAM**

Just like I told you!

**SLY**

Yeah, well, do we have any other options?

**CASSIE**

Is that the best you can do, one or two percent?

**QUINTILIANIS**

Well, the answer to that question depends on you more than me. There are those who have accomplished extraordinary things while facing tremendous obstacles, so if each of you does your very best, perhaps you too will overcome the ...uh... how you say, sobering odds.

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**MEMYSELFANDI**

And what if I flat out refuse to go along with this suicide mission?

**QUINTILIANIS**

If you refuse, the Emperor will not grant you your truest deepest wish; instead, he will deliver your deepest truest fear. In your case Eggman, you shall be brought to a long, slow boil until your yolk solidifies, your shell cracks and your innards spill forth. Then you shall be devoured by a swarm of ravenous snakes and excreted onto a barren salt flat where you shall burn in agony forever.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

Oh dear.

**NARRATOR**

Cassie, Sly and Assam didn't want to hear what fate awaited them if they refused. They knew too well their deepest truest fears and chose not to dwell on them.

**QUINTILIANIS** (clapping his hands once briskly)

So then--let's move on to the fun part!

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MUSIC: John Adams: Short Ride in a Fast Machine

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**NARRATOR**

Quintilianis picked up a clear glass beaker containing a shallow film of transparent liquid. In the liquid, barely visible, were eight gelatinous discs of various sizes. Each disc had a few tiny threads, also barely visible, dangling from them.

Quintilianis took a pair of tweezers and plucked the largest disc from the liquid and held it up to the light. It was round, soft and almost perfectly transparent. The threads dangling from it were superfine filaments as sheer as a spider's gossamer web.

**QUINTILIANIS**

Does anyone know what these are?

**CASSIE**

They look sort of like my dad's contact lenses, except for the thread things.

**QUINTILIANIS**

Right you are, my clever little friend. That's exactly what they are, only with a special twist: they fit on your eyes like contact lenses but they're actually microcameras. Once activated they will visually record everything you look at. The tiny microfilaments are power and recording fibers. These will transmit a live visual feed of the

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Crow's lair. If we gather enough visual-spatial data we may be able to assist you in escaping.

**MEMYSELFANDI**

What do you mean, you may be able to assist us?

**QUINTILIANIS**

Well, since you'll be seeing the place for the first time you won't know the way out. But as we collect your location data we will be building a 3D map of the Crow's operations center in realtime. With this map we hope to be able to guide you out.

**SLY**

But even if you figure out an escape route how are you gonna let us know?

**QUINTILIANIS**

Ah! I'm glad you asked. That brings us to our next item of interest, the Selective Frequency Audio Masking Device, or SFAMD.

**NARRATOR**

Quintilianis dangled two white beads attached to slender wires.

**CASSIE**

Earbuds?



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**QUINTILIANIS**

Yes. Very specialized earbuds. Whereas regular earbuds enable you to listen, these earbuds prevent you from listening!

**ASSAM**

We can't afford to be deaf in there.

**QUINTILIANIS**

No, of course not. These buds are designed to cancel out one very specific frequency: the frequency on which this will be broadcast.

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SOUND: Bizarre vocalizations (AlienExorcism)

**NARRATOR**

Quintilianis pointed to a soundwave histogram on a monitor display.

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MUSIC: Nino Rota - Juliet of the Spirits Soundtrack.mp3

**QUINTILIANIS**

You will trigger this audio loop 5 *nth* before you launch your hack. We call it The Diversion Mask. When you're wearing the specialized earbuds you won't hear The Diversion Mask because a diverting music track is dubbed over it. But anyone in the room who is not wearing

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these earbuds will be exposed. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that you wear these. Without them you will be exposed to the hypno-track and lulled into a catatonic state. Needless to say, if you're in a catatonic state the Crow will discover your plan and terminate you on the spot. The Ministry, of course, will deny all knowledge of your mission and you will have died in vain.

**ASSAM**

See? I told you so.

**NARRATOR**

Quintilianis held up a device similar to a USB dongle.

**QUINTILIANIS**

Once the guards in the room are immobilized you will install this.

It will download our spyware. At the same time, the snake must physically enter the mainframe array to attach these monitors at key com nodes.

**SLY**

Hey, I ain't no computer geek, how am I supposed to know which nodes?

**QUINTILIANIS**

The monitors have proximal sensors that light up when near a key

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node. See the light flash, drop the monitor on the mark.

**SLY**

Then what?

**QUINTILIANIS**

Then your work is done. Get yourself out of the mainframe, then out of the Crow's op center. Come back to the Pinnacle of Aspire and collect your reward.

**SLY**

Huh, just like that, huh?

**QUINTILIANIS**

Well, we'll see, won't we? He-he-he....

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE IN)

**NARRATOR**

Next: The Emperor's Ministry of Omniscience makes Cassie, Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam an offer they can't refuse: carry out a sneak attack on The Crow in a plan everyone is calling "The Suicide Mission".

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme

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SOUND: (EKG pulsing, flatlining)

[ end Chapter 28 ]