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Chapter 34: Not If I Can Help It

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR

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

Chapter 34: Not If I Can Help It.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: The Crow's operations center. Interior. Night.

SOUND: (alarm buzzing, running footsteps, barking dogs, mayhem)

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi (posing as Dr. John Chillykonkon) heard a squall of frantic commands over his earbuds:

INTEL SERVICE OPERATOR

Uncouple the donkey from the wagon! Repeat: Uncouple the donkey from the wagon!

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NARRATOR

Assam also heard that command over his earbuds but decided now was not the time to point out that he's an Andalusian thoroughbred stallion, not a common donkey.

INTEL SERVICE OPERATOR

Pull the hose out of the wagon and release the snake.

MEMYSELFANDI

I beg your pardon!

INTEL SERVICE OPERATOR (impatiently)

Pull the hose out of the wagon and release the snake.

MEMYSELFANDI

Oh dear....

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi struggled to remove the red end cap from the hose. From behind the false end of packed fiber optic cables Sly poked his head out.

MEMYSELFANDI

Now what?

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INTEL SERVICE OPERATOR

Wrap the snake around yourself, mount the donkey and ride him along the following route.

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi looked as though he was about to vomit as he coiled Sly around his torso. But, desperate to escape, he did as he was told. In a series of turns and climbs Assam, Sly and Memyselfandi eventually reached a large bay door.

INTEL SERVICE OPERATOR

On the wall-mounted touch pad, enter the passcode, 237, PKM, 551. That's 237, P, as in PNEUMATIC, K, as in KNOWLEDGE, M, as in MNEMONIC, 551.

NARRATOR

The bay door rattled open, and Memyselfandi, Assam and Sly stepped out onto a platform which had a large circle painted on the floor, a landing port for a helicopter.

SLY

Hey, where's Cassie?

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MEMYSELFANDI

How should I know? She could be anywhere.

SLY

We've got to go back in there and get her, she could be in trouble.

MEMYSELFANDI

It's far too dangerous to go back in there now, you'll get us all killed!

SLY

We can't just abandon her, after all she's done for us.

MEMYSELFANDI

What has she ever done for me? I'd be better off if I had just stayed up on my wall.

SOUND: (footsteps running)

SLY

Cassie! Jet! Over here!

CASSIE

Oh my God...what is this?

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MEMYSELFANDI

It appears to be some sort of heliport. Let's hope the Emperor's Air Force can find us here.

SOUND: (whoosh)

CASSIE

Hey—what's that?

NARRATOR

A shiny bubble, clear and iridescent like a soap bubble, fell out of the sky. Cassie, Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam froze at the strange sight. The bubble zoomed up to them, then stopped and bobbed silently in the air. It was large enough for the man inside it, a man wearing the uniform of the Emperor's Imperial Air Force. He held out one hand steadily as if operating a control lever though no lever could be seen.

PILOT (urgently)

Get in—quickly!

MEMYSELFANDI

How can we fit in? That thing barely holds you!

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PILOT

Just get in—NOW!

NARRATOR

Memyseldandi pushed himself inside the bubble which simply expanded to surround him along with the pilot.

Cassie, Sly and Assam didn't need orders, they climbed in right behind Memyselfandi. As each new passenger jumped in, the bubble expanded to accommodate them. Once all were on board the bubble had stretched to the size of a minivan, large enough to hold an 800-pound donkey plus his friends, but no larger than need be.

As soon as the last one climbed in, the bubble shot straight up like a helicopter but as quiet as a butterfly. A squad of Icemen ran out onto the drawbridge and looked up. The bubble sped away so swiftly, dodging as gracefully as a nighthawk, it flew out of range.

MUSIC: (uptempo, bright)

CASSIE

How did you find us?

PILOT

Geo-trackers in your earbuds.

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SLY

Quintilianis never showed us this vehicle.

PILOT

He wanted to save his big surprise for the end. Plus, we didn't think you'd actually make it so we didn't want to waste our precious fuel unless really we had to.

NARRATOR

The shape-shifting bubble zipped and dipped silently through the clouds.

MEMYSELFANDI

This thing is so quiet. Exactly what kind of vehicle is it?

PILOT

It's an SAPT: Silent Airborne Personnel Transporter.

MEMYSELFANDI

How does it run? I don't hear a sound.

PILOT

It runs on Eterna, a revolutionary fuel that literally reproduces itself as it burns.

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MEMYSELFANDI

I've never heard of such a thing. What fuel can possibly reproduce itself?

PILOT

Proprietary information, my friend, proprietary.

CASSIE

What does that mean?

SLY

It means they own it and they're not about to share the secret.

PILOT

For a snake you have quite a vocabulary.

SLY

Hey, it's a gift, what can I say?

NARRATOR

Then Assam noticed something jagged and black sticking out from under Cassie's jacket.

ASSAM

Say Cassie, are those...burnt feathers?

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CASSIE

Yeah, and now that we've escaped I can show everybody.

MEMYSELFANDI (gasping)

The Crow's ceremonial headdress! How did you....why did you?

CASSIE

The Crow wore this to terrify people. Now no one's ever gonna wear it again. Not if I can help it.

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE IN)

NARRATOR

Next: Now that the strangers have accomplished what was thought to be impossible, it's time for each of them to collect their rewards.

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 34]