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## Chapter 37: The Oracle

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

### NARRATOR

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.  
Chapter 37: The Oracle.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

### Scene One: The Great Hall, Pinnacle of Aspire.

MUSIC: (J.S. Bach, The Art of Fugue, Contrapunctus 3)

SOUND: (murmuring audience)

### NARRATOR

After Assam had been called upon to state his deepest truest wish  
Cassie began to wonder:

### CASSIE

Is the Viceroy drawing names by chance, like in a lottery, or is

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there a planned order? Why hasn't he called me yet? I'm the one Queen Mavis gave the data drive to, and I'm the only one who could open it. If it wasn't for me the whole operation against the Crow wouldn't have worked. Well...Sly, Memyselfandi and Assam all helped but it was my bio-encryption that opened the data drive.

**NARRATOR**

Now, as the Viceroy approached to announce the next recipient Cassie's heart raced for the third time.

**THE VICEROY**

In the name of the Omnipotent Emperor, I call upon Sly Snake to approach the Majestic Imperium.

**NARRATOR**

Cassie looked at Sly, both of them equally surprised. Sly slithered forward and halted at the hem of the Viceroy's purple cape.

**THE VICEROY**

I ask you, in the name of the Inscrutable Emperor: What is the one thing above all others that you wish for most fervently?

**NARRATOR**

Even though Sly had been expecting the question he couldn't believe

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he was now really in a position to have his wish granted.

**THE VICEROY**

Well? Speak up.

**SLY**

Suddenly I find myself embarrassed to admit this.

**THE VICEROY**

This is the time for honesty, not embarrassment.

**SLY**

Well, all my life I've experienced the same thing over and over and over again. Whenever I speak, strangers are taken aback, shocked, frightened. They can't believe they're actually hearing a talking snake. But instead of actually listening, they dismiss me as a freak, a monstrosity!

SOUND: (muted laughter from crowd)

MUSIC: (Pink Martini, Que Sera Sera)

**SLY (cont.)**

In fact, when I was younger, I once made the mistake of speaking to a

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strange man who was traveling through the valley. He was an odd man who drove a ramshackle wagon pulled by a toothless old mule. But as soon as he heard me speak he offered to make me rich and famous.

All I'd have to do was join Professor Williwaw and his Traveling Caravan of Stupendous Marvels. He said the work would be easy—all I had to do was talk—and audiences would pay handsomely for my 'special talent.'

Professor Williwaw assured me that I'd be in the company of like-minded creatures gifted with rare skills. There was a jack rabbit that could read minds, a mynah bird that predicted the future and a mouse that could solve any mathematical problem no matter how difficult. Room and board was free and I'd get to see the most astonishing places in the Empire. Well, I was young and curious, it sounded fantastic so I agreed.

#### **THE VICEROY**

Well clearly, you have demonstrated that you can speak, but what is your point?

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MUSIC: (Nino Rota, Juliet of the Spirits)

#### **SLY**

Professor Williwaw was right: it was amazing, at least for a while.

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Word spread that not only is there a talking snake in the Travelling Caravan but the snake can also sing songs, tell jokes, do amusing impersonations, offer advice, console you when you're down and is generally a charming conversational partner!

Of course the Professor loved it. The more garrulous I became the longer people stayed in my booth and the more the Professor charged them. We were making out like the proverbial bandits but I started to see a downside.

SOUND: (impatient cough, crowd rustling)

MUSIC: (Nino Rota, Juliet of the Spirits)

**SLY** (cont.)

As word of my conversational abilities spread, people started asking more and more serious questions. They asked me for advice on investing glunk, should they or should they not marry, did I think they should they move to Potowa and work for the Gatekeepers?

**THE VICEROY**

(Sighs) We are still waiting to hear your deepest truest wish.

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**SLY** (cont.)

I asked the Professor how should I answer such difficult questions? Then he said something that really hurt. 'Look,' he said, 'don't take yourself so damn seriously. These people don't listen to you. They ask you stuff so they can hear a snake talk. It's entertainment. They don't leave and try to live their lives based on what some carnival freak told them.

SOUND: (laughter)

**SLY** (cont.)

Then Professor Williwaw pulled me around to the front of my booth and pointed at the sign he'd hung there. The sign said:

**SEE THE MONSTROUS TALKING SERPENT!**

**HEAR THE DEVIL SNAKE TELL THE MOST DAMNABLE LIES!!**

**MARVEL AT THE DEMON WITH THE FORKED TONGUE AS HE SEDUCES LADIES,**

**BAMBOOZLES MEN AND BEGUILES INNOCENT CHILDREN!!!**

SOUND: (growing laughter)

**SLY** (cont.)

So that's the lesson I learned: I may be able to speak, but I'll never be taken seriously. I'm just a freak of nature.

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**THE VICEROY**

So, what is it you wish the Emperor to do about this?

**NARRATOR**

Sly squinted at the Viceroy. No matter how powerful the Emperor might be, how could he reverse a lifetime of experience and magically make everyone finally listen to him? The only way to really know, was to test the Emperor's word.

**SLY**

O.K. This is my deepest and truest wish: that everyone will finally listen to me and take my words seriously.

**THE VICEROY**

Well, that is a very unusual wish, I must say. Many are those who wish their word would not be taken so seriously. Still, nothing is impossible for the Emperor so he may grant you your wish. But before doing so I must caution you: You are no doubt acquainted with the saying, 'Be careful what you wish for?

**SLY**

Yes?

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**THE VICEROY**

If the Emperor so decrees, he may appoint you as the Oracle of All.

**SLY**

Wow—that sounds cool—the Oracle of All.

**THE VICEROY**

However, once appointed Oracle, the lives and fortunes of countless Aspirants shall depend on you. All shall seek your wisdom. You must therefore remain vigilant over every word you utter. No longer will you be able to indulge in whim or fancy. You shall not tell tall tales to amuse yourself or others.

**NARRATOR**

As much as Sly had thought about his wish before asking, he hadn't thought about it in quite the way the Viceroy described it.

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MUSIC: (J.S.Bach, The Art of Fugue, Contrapunctus 5)

**THE VICEROY**

It is a profound responsibility. If you wish to be taken at your word you carry a very heavy burden because your word can no longer be frivolous or shallow or untrue. No longer will you be permitted to exaggerate or embellish for dramatic effect. Dissembling, demurring,



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manipulating, swaying, coercing, intimidating, cursing, threatening, wheedling, cajoling, importuning, maligning, gossiping and jesting are all out. Lying is categorically forbidden, even so-called 'white lies.' Stretching the truth will cost you. Your word shall be your bond. If you misuse your words you shall forfeit their power. If you are ever caught lying or using your words in any way less than honestly, you will be stripped of all your power to charm with words. Your prestige as Oracle will be voided and you will be ostracized as a lying fool to whom no one will ever listen again. Is that understood?

**SLY**

Hmmm...be careful what you wish for indeed!

**THE VICEROY**

I ask you for the final time, is this your deepest and truest wish?

**SLY**

Well...ahem....well, well, well....

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**MUSIC:** Blizzard Theme (FADE IN)

**NARRATOR**

Next: Why has the Viceroy kept passing over Cassie? How could they

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forget her? Has the Emperor broken his promise? Why would he do that?

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[ end Chapter 37 ]