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Chapter 38: Tiny Yellow Bird

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR

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

Chapter 38: Tiny Yellow Bird.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: The Great Hall, Pinnacle of Aspire.

SOUND: (Church-hall-audience-shuffling)

NARRATOR

After seeing Memyselfandi, Assam and Sly all have their deepest truest wish granted, Cassie still wondered why she was made to wait for so long. Now, as the last one to be heard, she felt her heart race for the fourth time.

Finally, the Viceroy summoned her to stand before her three friends, honoured dignitaries, the Grey Eminences and sundry citizens of the Empire.

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The Viceroy went through the same formalities as he did with Memyselfandi, Assam and Sly. The difference this time was when Cassie stated her truest deepest wish the Viceroy shook his head slowly and said,

THE VICEROY

(Gravely) I regret having to tell you this, but yours is the one wish the Emperor cannot grant.

SOUND: (crowd murmuring)

SLY

(Irate) What's the meaning of this? You've reneged on your word!

NARRATOR

Sly, who had accepted the role of Oracle of All, was speaking up for Cassie.

CASSIE

You said the Emperor could grant any and all wishes!

NARRATOR

Then Memyselfandi stood up in protest.

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MEMYSELFANDI

Oh surely if you can make me a Chancellor, Assam a Judge and Sly an Oracle, then anything is possible! Why has the Emperor betrayed Cassie?

THE VICEROY

Please! Please! Please! We simply have never heard of such a wish before! There is no precedent for it!

MEMYSELFANDI

Oh, so you've had Eggmen who wished to be Chancellors? Donkeys who sought Judicial appointments? Snakes who aspired to be oracles? You can't be serious!

SOUND: (crowd murmuring and stirring)

NARRATOR

The Grey Eminences rose and huddled with the Viceroy. Then they stepped aside and the Viceroy turned to Cassie.

THE VICEROY

(Sighs) Given the extraordinary nature of the circumstances we shall request a private audience with the Emperor. If the Emperor agrees, we shall appeal on your behalf.

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SLY

Empty words! We demand action!

ASSAM

Cassie accomplished her mission. She eliminated the Crow and his threat to the Emperor. For the love of all that is right and just, you cannot let her down!

NARRATOR

Memyselfandi pointed at the display on the dais.

MEMYSELFANDI

Look! She even brought back the Crow's ceremonial headdress! How can you possibly deny her truest deepest wish?

SOUND: (crowd murmuring and stirring)

ASSAM

They say assume the worst and you won't be disappointed. Well maybe that's what Cassie should have done and saved herself a lot of trouble.

MEMYSELFANDI

Why, Cassie brought us all together in the first place. She's the one

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who defeated the Crow and captured his evil headdress. How dare the Emperor turn his back on Cassie after all she's done?

SLY

Why is Cassie the only one whose truest deepest wish has been denied, huh? Answer me that!

MUSIC: (somber, transitional)

Scene Two: The Great Hall, Pinnacle of Aspire.

MUSIC: (somber, transitional)

NARRATOR

Eventually, the Viceroy returned to the Strangers and made his announcement.

THE VICEROY

After great deliberation, the Emperor has arrived at a decision. The best we can do in such extraordinary circumstances is to try to salvage the Skirling kite that all of you arrived in.

SOUND: (crowd murmuring and stirring)

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THE VICEROY (cont.)

(*clearing his throat*) There is a caveat, however: the *dinka* was so badly damaged in its crash-landing that only a fraction of its special silk could be salvaged. So now the kite is so small it can carry Cassie and one other passenger only, a passenger that must weigh under 10 *parmas*, which means that peculiar black creature Cassie refers to as 'Jet.'

SOUND: (crowd murmuring and stirring)

NARRATOR

So Cassie and Jet would have to brave the journey back across the Sea of Opacity on their own. That was not only sad, it was worrisome because quite possibly, the only way all five of them made it across the Sea of Opacity in the first place was due to their teamwork.

MUSIC: (brooding, foreboding)

Scene Three: The beach at Aspire, day.

SOUND: (wind, seagulls)

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MUSIC: (Nino Rota: Juliet of the Spirits, circus)

NARRATOR

On the morning of Cassie and Jet's scheduled departure curious citizens thronged to the beach. The mayor of Aspire ordered a traditional marching band and everyone tried to put on a happy face but close up many faces looked more worried than excited.

More than anyone else perhaps, Sly looked the most worried, if a snake's face could be said to look worried. For all his talent with words and clever expressions Sly suddenly seemed dumb as he watched Cassie prepare to board the *dinka*.

SOUND: (wind, seagulls, ocean waves crashing)

NARRATOR (cont)

The breakers crashed on the beach and the winds blew strong from across the Sea of Opacity but the silence among the Strangers as they watched Cassie prepare to launch made Memyselfandi feel so self conscious he simply had to say something.

MEMYSELFANDI

Cassie, you come from a strange realm none of us know. Even if we returned with you, if we ever got there we'd never fit in.

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We wouldn't belong there. It would be like you staying in Aspire. It's wonderful to be with your friends, but if you truly don't belong somewhere you'll be longing for something you can't have for the rest of your life.

CASSIE

I know. I do come from far away and I miss my mom and dad so much. As much as I've come to love all of you I think I'd always miss my home and worry that my parents must be so sad without me.

NARRATOR

Now Assam turned his big sad eyes to her and said,

ASSAM

You're right Cassie. You need to be where you belong most. We love you more than anyone but we're from different worlds. As much as we want to be happy we want you to be happy too. And even though Aspire is wonderful it could never be your home, not your true home with your family.

NARRATOR

Sly, struggling to hold back tears said,

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SLY

Cassie, I'm afraid I've been granted my wish because now I can't make light of your leaving. In the past I would have made a joke or sang a song or told a silly story, anything to keep me from saying what I feel most deeply. I'll always miss you more than words can ever say and I wish I could go with you but I know that's not possible.

CASSIE

Oh...now it's my turn to cry...

NARRATOR

Cassie went around and gave each of her friends a big hug.

How strange it felt to hug a big egg, a donkey and a snake!

Then Admiral Tarkovsky, commissioned to oversee the launch, shouted through his bullhorn.

ADMIRAL TARKOVSKY

Your attention please, citizens of Aspire: tide and wind are now in most optimal place, da? So is time to launch.

NARRATOR

Cassie grabbed Jet and made her way to the floating rig where the *dinka* awaited.

At the sound of the chimes from the Pinnacle of Aspire's

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carillon the Admiral gave his signal: the tethers were cut from their sandbag anchors and the guy wire was paid out by a pulley mounted on a cutter heading out to open water.

The *dinka* rose and rose and rose on the updraft, high into a silvery blue sky, higher and higher up, farther and farther out to sea until it appeared to the onlookers gathered on the beach like a tiny yellow bird flying all the way to the other side of the Empire.

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE IN)

NARRATOR

Next: Cassie believes that if you want something badly enough you can achieve it. So she resolves to attempt the impossible—again!

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 38]