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Chapter 39: Some Medicine

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.
Chapter 39: Some Medicine.

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: Somewhere high above the Sea of Opacity. Evening.

SOUND: (wind, light flapping, distant waves)

NARRATOR

Admiral Tarkovsky had thought it very odd when he asked Cassie how she operated the *dinka* in flight mode.

CASSIE

I don't really know. It's almost as if the *dinka* knew where we wanted to go and took us there.

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NARRATOR

Admiral Tarkovsky simply could not believe the Strangers had managed to cross the Sea of Opacity without charts or know-how. And if they had, the chances of repeating such a stunt were nil. But he had his orders, and his orders were to tow the *dinka* out to open water, then release it once it gained proper altitude. What happened to it and the little girl and cat inside was, in the end, not his responsibility.

Admiral Tarkovsky wasn't the first one to ask Cassie how the *dinka* worked. Back when she and her fellow travellers crash-landed on the beach, no one in Aspire had never seen a *dinka*. Her rescuers had many questions about how it was piloted, but neither Cassie nor her friends had useful explanations.

CASSIE

I told you, it's almost as if the *dinka* knew where we wanted to go and took us there.

NARRATOR

The tribunal assumed she was lying. But she wasn't lying; it was more like she wanted to believe a miracle could explain a great mystery. And that's what she was hoping for on her journey back across the Sea of Opacity: another miracle. She believed that if you wanted

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something badly enough—like wanting to go home and be with your loved ones again—if you want it more than anything else in the world, then your desire, if pure and powerful enough, could carry you through and somehow get you there.

MUSIC: (ambient, drifting, oceanic)

Scene Two: High above the Sea of Opacity. Sunset.

SOUND: (wind, waves)

NARRATOR

Among all the unknowns of Cassie's journey, one thing was sure: the sun setting over the Sea of Opacity was beautiful. A great orange ball melting into the deepest blue sea. It sank slowly, sliding almost imperceptibly, a huge orange circle, then a wavering half-circle, then a flattened ingot of molten orange flaring in one final flash of glory.

Once the sun vanished the deep blue sky grew indigo, and indigo went cobalt, and darkened to an unfathomable black dome shimmering with billions of points of sparkling light, constellations familiar and constellations strange, all spinning throughout a deep black

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void.

High up in the sky far above the waves Cassie drifted along in a gentle breeze. It was so quiet she could hear Jet's purring as she lay curled in a perfect circle perched on a wicker basket, breathing in the pure sea air.

Watching Jet sleep always made Cassie smile. Sometimes, if Cassie was nervous or excited about the next day and she couldn't sleep, she'd look at Jet curled up on her bed, a perfect black fuzzy circle. The fur on her sides would rise a bit and sink a bit, rise and sink, rise and sink, and Cassie would listen to Jet's little motor purring away to her heart's content.

CASSIE

That's how to sleep, isn't it Jet? You're an expert. You can sleep through anything, anywhere: Lying in the funniest positions, perched in the weirdest places you just settle in and fall asleep, don't you?

NARRATOR

Nine times out of ten, after Cassie watched Jet sleeping so peacefully she'd drift off to sleep herself. And tonight, high above the Sea of Opacity, was no exception.

MUSIC: (ambient, drifting, ominous undercurrent)

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NARRATOR

There were certain things Cassie didn't want to think about. She knew about them of course but she also knew that if she thought of them too much they'd fill her with fear, and fear could paralyze her.

It came down to a *What if* question: What if the screaming starts again? The cyclone? Water spouts? Hurricanes? As the wind grew stronger and louder Cassie began to miss her friends more and more. But now it was just her and Jet. And while Cassie loved her more than anything, Jet couldn't read like Memyselfandi did on the flight over, huddled over his Swiper talking about how to use the stars for guidance. Even if Memyselfandi was making it up, it calmed Cassie to hear him read with such assurance.

And Sly was always distracting Cassie with a question, a riddle, a story, a joke or a song to help her stop worrying. On the flight over, when the winds kicked up fierce and threatening, Assam stood firm and resolute, a steady rock in the storm.

Now only Jet was at Cassie's side, ten scrawny pounds of damp fur. Cassie felt this much smaller version of the *dinka* rock and sway. She grabbed hold of a silk guy line and wound it around her forearm just in case the gondola did capsize she might be able to hang on somehow. She tucked Jet inside her jacket to protect her from

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the sleet that began to pelt against the skittering *dinka*.

SOUND: (howling wind, pelting sleet and rain)

And then it came, what she'd dreaded: the screaming, the horrible screaming. As in the trip over, the screaming grew so loud Cassie couldn't stand it. She pressed Jet deep into the folds of her jacket and curled up into a ball on the bottom of the gondola. She covered her ears and could see nothing in the dark except blinding flashes of lightning and streaks of silvery sleet slashing across the sky. The light flickered so fast and bright it made her think of the monitor screen on the Crow's computer as she downloaded his data onto Queen Mavis's data drive.

Cassie had stared at the Crow's monitor, watching the cascade of text and numbers flow faster and faster till she couldn't read them. They sped into a rushing stream of shimmering white like a waterfall roaring before her. And then it stopped. Frozen in the centre of the monitor was a rectangular box of bold upper-case letters that said:

EMPEROR'S TRUE IDENTITY REVEALED!!!

SOUND: (thunder, pelting rain)

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MUSIC: (scream climax)

Scene Three: Hospital, Osborn, North Dakota. Day.

SOUND: (hospital, shuffling, PA announcements, etc.)

NARRATOR

Ellie leaned in closer but couldn't make out what Cassie was saying.

ELLIE

(to Cassie) What did you say honey? (to Frank) Frank, did you hear what she said?

FRANK

It sounded like she said 'the Empress is an alligator.' I don't know.

NARRATOR

Cassie spoke again.

CASSIE

(slurred) The emperor is an elegant reverend.

ELLIE

I have no idea what she just said: 'The emperor is an elegant reverend?'

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NARRATOR

Suddenly, Frank and Ellie were troubled by the same thought: was Cassie brain-injured? Had she lost her ability to speak clearly? Then, once again Cassie mumbled:

CASSIE

(slurred) The end person is an alpha rhythm.

FRANK

That sounded like 'the end person is an alpha rhythm.'

ELLIE

Cassie's speaking nonsense, let's get the doctor.

CASSIE

(matter of factly) The Emperor is an algorithm.

NARRATOR

This time both Ellie and Frank heard Cassie, clear as a bell.

FRANK

Ellie, I'm gonna go get Doctor Baldwin.

ELLIE

Cassie, I...don't understand what you just said.

CASSIE

(clearly) The Emperor is an algorithm.

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NARRATOR

Frank came back into the room with Cassie's doctor.

DOCTOR BALDWIN

(upbeat) Well look who's back! How are you feeling, Cassie?

CASSIE

OK. My knee hurts and...I feel kind of sleepy.

DOCTOR BALDWIN

That's because we gave you some medicine. You hit your head pretty badly but we stitched it up and now you're as good as new.

CASSIE

Where is Sly?

ELLIE

Who?

CASSIE

Sly. And Memyselfandi. And Assam?

ELLIE

Excuse me?

NARRATOR

Ellie glanced at Frank and the doctor.

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CASSIE

I met a talking snake named Sly. And an eggman, and a talking donkey who thought he was a horse.

DOCTOR BALDWIN

Well...it sounds like you've had quite an adventure.

NARRATOR

The doctor turned to Frank and Ellie.

DOCTOR BALDWIN

(to the parents) The sedative we give for pain can cause vivid dreaming, not to worry.

CASSIE

It wasn't a dream, doctor, I was really there!

DOCTOR BALDWIN

(to Cassie) Oh? Heh-heh-heh... *(turns back to parents)* Look, Mr and Mrs Cole, Cassie will be fine. Keep an eye on her, see that she eats and sleeps properly, make sure she doesn't go into a deep sleep for longer than eight hours, OK?. She'll be up and running full-speed in a day or two.

NARRATOR

Frank and Ellie leaned in and hugged Cassie. She was back! She was talking again! She was out of the woods, just like Doctor Baldwin had predicted. They hugged and cried on the bed. Ellie and Frank were so

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happy their daughter came out of her 7-day coma. Cassie was so happy to be back with her mom and dad. She'd soon find out about the terrible school bus accident she survived and the worst blizzard that ever hit Osborn. But, first things first:

CASSIE

Where's Jet?

ELLIE

She's home honey, and she misses you.

FRANK

We're all gonna be home together soon sweetie—you, me, momma and Jet—all back together again!

CASSIE

(Joyfully) Yay!

MUSIC: (Bill Frisell, Poem for Eva)

NARRATOR

And so concludes The Blizzard of Osborn. Thanks for joining us on this epic journey.

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Finally, thanks to you, all the listeners who tuned in for the ride. Happy listening, and happy dreams!

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MUSIC: Bill Frisell, Poem for Eva (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 39,
end The Blizzard of Osborn]