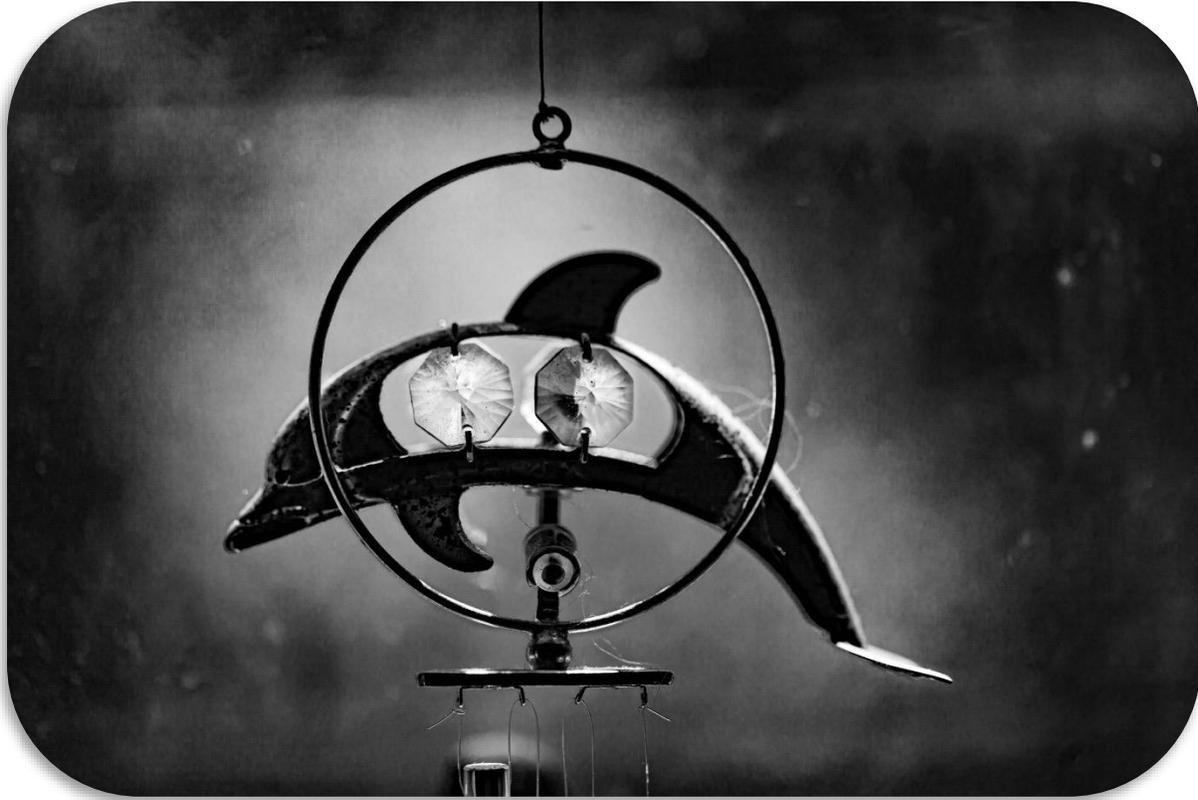


The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 104: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, meet the Dolphin of Diamonds.

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“Stop you two!” screamed a dolphin tied to the moment by a strange metallic apparatus. The center of its body had been gouged out and replaced by two giant sparkling diamonds. “I,” said the dolphin, “am the Dolphin of Diamonds and you will take a moment from your wanderings to admire me.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, being long-time admirers of dolphins and diamonds were thrilled to the core at the sight of both combined into one.

“Oh, great Dolphin of Diamonds,” they chanted in unison. Their voices trembled with awe. “We will gladly take a moment from our wanderings to admire you.”

“What?” said the Dolphin of Diamonds. “Just like that? Just like that...I tell you to admire me and the two of you just stop whatever the hell you’re doing and admire me?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, exchanged confused glances. They were beginning to question their feelings about dolphins and diamonds. Maybe they weren’t such a great mix after all.

“But you said you wanted us to admire you,” said Crazy Man.

“Well, that doesn’t mean you just stop and do whatever you’re told,” said the Dolphin of Diamonds. “What if I told you to jump off a cliff? Would you just willy-nilly jump off a cliff?”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, being rebels with a cause, though they were never really sure what that cause could possibly be, were deeply offended by the Dolphin of Diamond’s attitude.

“Maybe we have parachutes or bungee cords,” said Crazy Man. “And maybe we jump off cliffs all the time.”

“Do you have a parachute?” said the Dolphin of Diamonds.

“Maybe,” said Crazy Man. “And maybe not. But I might have a kitchen and I’m planning on buying a flame thrower...asap.”

“Go jump off a cliff,” said the Dolphin of Diamonds.

“You go jump off a cliff!” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Yeah,” said Crazy Man, “if you’re so much into jumping off cliffs, then you go and jump off a cliff.”

“That’s not the point,” said the Dolphin of Diamonds. “I was just making a point about the two of you doing whatever you’re told to do.”

“We don’t do what anybody tells us to do,” said a defiant Crazy Man. “We are our own man and dog.”

“We were just going to admire you because we’re long-time admirers of dolphins and diamonds,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Right,” said Crazy Man. “And if we jump off a cliff, it’s because we want to jump off a cliff, not because some crazy dolphin tells us to.”

“And we just happen to be big fans of jumping off cliffs,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “But there’s one thing we love better.”

“What’s that?” said the Dolphin of Diamonds.

“Throwing stones at dolphins,” said the dog, Sidestepper. He dipped his head down and clamped his jowls around a stone the size of an egg and tossed it to Crazy Man with a swift snap of his neck. Crazy Man caught the stone and cupped his hands around it as he smiled sardonically at the Dolphin of Diamonds. He tossed it between his hands a few times, smiling, silent, staring evilly into the dolphin’s eyes.

“We saved the earth from aliens,” he said. “But not really. Everybody thinks we did, so I guess we did. Even though we didn’t...but no diamond-studded dolphin is going to tell us what to do. We are man and we are dog and we are...”

“You’re a funny looking dork with a stone that you forgot what you were going to do with,” said the Dolphin of Diamonds. “And even if you threw it at me, you’d miss because you and your doggie friend are bastards and you’ll never find his mother and you’ll never find a map to food.”

These vile words crunched into the ear drums of dog and stone-wielding man with the force of a syntactical tsunami and they were one in their resolve to make this damnable dolphin pay. Crazy Man arched his back, raised his arm and threw the stone. It streaked through the air like a stone the size of an egg streaking through the air, and shattered as it struck one of the diamonds. The Dolphin of Diamonds was unfazed and hadn’t even moved an inch.

It laughed and said, “That all ya got!” It laughed some more...loud sarcastic biscuit sticks of laughter dipped in scoff pudding. “You can jump off that cliff now. And take the funny looking dog with you. I’ll bet his mother was a package of toothpicks with wood for brains.”

That did it. That was the last straw. The dog, Sidestepper, being overly sensitive to his mother’s looks, even though he had no idea what she looked like or even if she were a dog and if he were a genetic experiment gone wrong, felt a crevasse of despair open deep in the pits of his dogness and he fell to the ground screaming, crying, cursing and kicking his stilt legs at all the world’s injustices, especially those concerning dogs and lost mothers. This went on for a staggering .0977 seconds (give or take .0978 seconds) before he came to his senses, shot straight up and said, “You’re nothing but a fish with a rock collection.”

Suddenly, the Dolphin of Diamonds shook like jello on amphetamines and screamed, “I am not a fish! I am not a fish!”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, laughed and pointed at the Dolphin of Diamonds and yelled, “Fish! Fish! Fish!”

This infuriated the Dolphin of Diamonds even more. “Bad biology! Bad biology! I’m a mammal and you’re both sore excuses for life forms.”

Now Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were incensed. Though confused about a lot of things...and possibly everything...both man and dog were certain of one thing: They were one in their resolve to put this non-fish entity in its place, wherever that was.

“You have no place in the real world,” said Crazy Man.

“Yeah,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “and you only take up space in our imaginations.”

“And without us,” said Crazy Man, “you’re just another dolphin looking for a place to swim.”

“And we don’t have a map to water,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Your diamonds are old coal,” said Crazy Man.

The Dolphin of Diamonds stared in horror at man and dog. Who were these two to be talking like this? Had it not allowed them to think twice before admiring it? Where was their admiration for its magnanimous treatment toward them? Suddenly, it lost its luster. Its diamonds turned back to coal. The strange apparatus suspending it in the air dissolved in the apparent truth that there was no apparatus and there was no Dolphin of Diamonds. There was only a lump of coal floating in the air.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared at it. They stared for hours and possibly days before the dog, Sidestepper, said, “We should go bungee jumping sometime.”

“Really?” said Crazy Man.

“Naw,” said the dog, Sidestepper, with a smirk. “I think I’d rather smack a lump of coal.”

On that thought, the dog, Sidestepper, turned his hindquarters towards the floating lump of coal and heaved off a mighty mule-like kick with both hind legs and shattered the Dolphin of Diamond’s lingering myth into coal dust that sprinkled itself over the ground where the land absorbed it.

Man and dog smiled and made no plans for bungee jumping anywhere in the future as they continued down the path of adventure and new meanings in search of all the usual stuff...mothers, maps to food...this big puzzling outside thing.

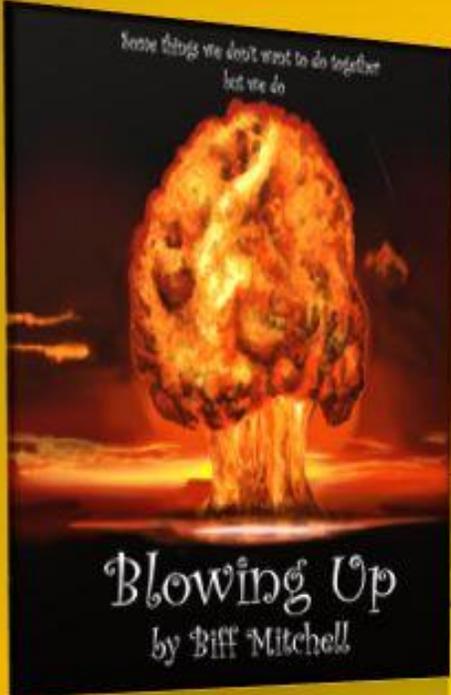
To be continued...

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COMING THIS FALL FROM FICTION4ALL!



Some things we don't want to do together
but we do

Blowing Up
by Biff Mitchell

By Bill Mitchell
Blowing Up

In the end,
only the
laughter will
be heard.

Coming this Fall!

FROM THE FIRST STORY, *SLEEPING IN DITCHES...*

Near the close of the 21st Century, God commanded, "Hey Noah, I want you to build a canoe."

"But Lord," said Noah, "shouldn't that be an ark?"

"No," said God, "there's not that much worth saving."

By evening and day I'm the man of the hour, the life of the party, the wit, the insider, the compleat schmooz rider. I'm the water cooler sage, the lunchroom rage; everybody wants to hear me, everybody wants to be near me, everybody wants to absorb me through that huge umbrella of thought that surrounds me, bouncing away everything I don't want to know.

There's a lot of crap out there, and shit falls out of the sky, but not on me. I'm the source of my own crap and people respect me for that. I'm like the faucet I can't turn off. Wordsworth's spontaneous overflow without the meter. I'm a damn flood.

At night, I sleep in ditches.

Not the same ditch every night. I have favorites and sometimes I like to try something new. I've slept in ditches full of needles and condoms and barking spiders. I wear two wide swatches of red on my back from a slick of bubbling something-or-other at the bottom of a ditch by a chemical plant. I've seen small things flitter and flap in the darkness around rusted tin cans while they debated whether to leave me alone or eat me.

But it's not all bad.

I woke once in a ditch with immaculate new suburban ranch-style houses with carved lawns on one side and a field of sprawling swamp and early morning animal sounds on the other. In a clearing by a stream banked with yellow and blue flowers, an army of bulldozers pointed right at the swamp and its animal noises. I felt like I was on the cusp of something wonderful and nascent. Soon, I thought, those bulldozers will turn God's land into something useful for his children. Yes, I believe in God. His outline glowed in the aura surrounding those formidable machines—his tools built by man in his power's image.

The grass in that ditch was long and thick and made for comfortable sleeping. Right by my head, the biggest most beautiful dandelions opened with brilliant bursts of yellow and orange, their leaves vibrating with the deepest green I'd ever known. There was grandeur in those flowers. Their beauty was irresistible. I reached out...and I ate them.

Blowing Up will be available at reputable online stores in late Fall. Stay tuned to biffmitchell.com for details. In the meantime...happy reading.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Biff Mitchell is bald and has no idea how to use his cell phone. In spite of this he taught writing workshops through the University of New Brunswick's College of Extended Learning for a decade. He's also given workshops on science fiction, humor, mystery, horror and publishing through the Maritime Writer's Workshop, the FogLit Literary Festival, Culture Days Canada and the Muse Online Writers Conference.

Biff's new publisher, Fiction4All, will be publishing the questionable book of short stories, *Blowing Up* as a Double Dragon imprint.

Biff is also a world famous photographer in his daydreams and has taken a few passable pictures that he displays on his photography website www.biffmitchellvisuals.com

You can learn more about Biff at www.biffmitchell.com.

Portrait by Rob Pasma