

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 134: Wherein Crazy Man and the Dog Sidestepper, swing into the day.

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“Chains...my...world...has...got...me locked up in chains...and they ain’t the kind of chains...a-that you can see-eee-eee,” screeched a leather swing seat chained to another leather swing seat in a playground by a lake.

“That sounds familiar,” said Crazy Man.

The dog, Sidestepper, whose nails were dancing in his paws, said, “Not the best message, but nice beat.”

“Try listening to it all day,” said the other leather swing seat. “And night. Every day and every night. Day after day and night after night...”

Sensing a lecture or sob story coming on, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, prepared themselves for sleep, but suddenly, the leather swing seats started slamming themselves into each other, spinning and banging and jostling the chains, pulling against them until their leather began to split and unravel and still they bounced and bolted and they jiggled and rocked and then dropped down until they were suspended a few feet from the ground by a chain that bound them to the center of the poles and no swinging was possible.

With the barest of sighs, the leather swing seats drooped from their suspension like shrugs off cows marching into the nail. Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were tempted to empathize but it was exhausting and they’d done a lot of heavy duty empathizing lately so they decided to listen to the leather seats tell their story as long as it didn’t go on for too long...like more than a minute.

“It’s not fair!” said one of the leather seats. “We were made for play and then they tied us up so we can’t play. We’re swing seats with no swing.”

“Un-swung in the playground,” said the other leather seat.

“But we’re safe,” said the other leather seat.

“That’s right,” said the other leather seat. “Nobody’s going to go crazy swinging on us out of season without the best intentions keeping an eye on us.”

“But all the fun’s gone,” said the other leather seat.

“And now we just hang here like this until the day of the month is the right day of the month and we’re suddenly safer than all the previous days of the month even when nobody’s around,” said the other leather seat.

“We’re victims of good intentions run amok,” said the other leather seat. “Condemned to chains by minds in chains.”

The leather seats went quiet for a few minutes or weeks while Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, slept...which was their response to sob stories and anything that might make them do that most painful of things: Think. When they woke up it was still whatever season and the two leather swing seats still dangled in their potential to spew disaster.

“You’re very lucky we were chained while you slept,” said the other leather seat. “We might have gone into a suicidal swing formation and pummeled you with all the force of a well-thought-out scenario of death and doom.”

“But you didn’t,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“But the possibility existed,” said the other leather seat.

“But you were chained together,” said Crazy Man.

“Which is exactly what saved you from us,” said the other leather seat.

“But even if you were unchained,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “you’re too far away to do anything to us.”

“Distance is a state of mind,” said the other leather seat. “In the real world of worry and lawsuits, you might have been right up here beside us and we might have bounced up and down on your heads and caused you long moments on mental anguish.”

“We’re swings,” said the other leather seat, “and apparently, we do things like that.”

“You just have to think about it long enough,” said other leather seat.

“So you have to wait till play season before they unchain you and people can swing on you and...” Crazy Man tried to say.

“No!” said both leather seats together.

“They don’t let anyone in here when we’re unchained,” said the other leather seat, its voice laced with horror. “The potential for catastrophe would be more than the world of caution-before-everything could bear.”

“We can be looked at,” said the other leather chair, “but we cannot be used, according to the signs.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked around and saw the signs. They were everywhere.

KEEP OFF THE SWINGS

NO LOITERING IN THE SANDBOX

DOGS, CHILDREN AND OTHERS NOT ALLOWED

GO HOME!

They were beginning to suspect that this playground was no place to play. And then they saw the lines of longing eyes and sad faces, their beach towels wrapped around their bellies, coolers full of ice and cold drinks at their feet, silent and waiting. The lines extended into the deep dark scary woods and the playground was ringed with pleading faces and eyes held back by the invisible barrier of someone’s paranoia.

It was too much.

Crazy Man just happened to have a set of bolt cutters in his back pocket. He'd known from the moment he'd set hands on them that those industrial strength bolt cutters would come in handy someday. He pulled them out and ran like a wild screaming banshee towards the leather swing seats and went bolt-cutting berserk. He snapped and cracked and banged and rattled. He heaved and shoved and pushed and pulled until all the chains, all the bolts, all the nails and boards and doomsday signs were cleared away and the playground was a pristine wilderness of potential disaster.

He and the dog, Sidestepper, barely jumped out of the way and back onto the path of adventure and new meanings before the play-starved masses flooded into the playground in a tsunami of sunscreen and selfies. The air filled with the sound of children laughing, adults barking barbeque orders, dogs splashing into beach water and mosquitoes feeding on untended babies. The smell of lotions and sprays mingled with the aroma of burning wieners on charcoal hibachis.

Until the mad cows arrived. But that's another story.

Soon, everyone was gone before Crazy Man could remember to ask if any of them had a map to food or knew the whereabouts of lost mothers. A full moon drabbled light through the clouds down onto the two journeyers as they continued down the path of adventure and new meanings laughing and joking about nothing in particular.

To be continued...

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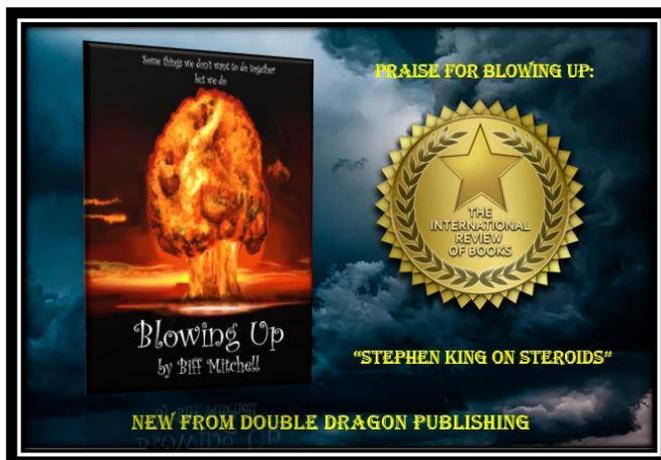
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