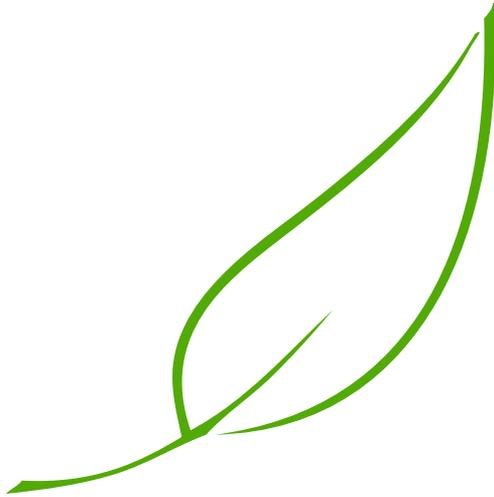


I AM GOING CRAZY

by Ken Bradbury



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Can we talk? I mean just for a minute. Can we talk? And if you don't listen to me, that's okay, because nobody else does either. I want to tell you a secret. You listening? I ... am ... going ... crazy. No, no ... don't worry. I'm not dangerous ... just crazy.

Have you ever been a boy? Okay, some of you have and some of you are and some of you never will be, but have you ever been one? A boy, I mean? It's not easy. I mean, if somebody offers you the job, don't take it. It makes you crazy. My mom says it's my chromosomes. She's always got an answer for everything. She says that girls have two X chromosomes and boys have an X and a Y and as far as I'm concerned that doesn't explain anything. Like basketball. Chromosomes have nothing to do with basketball. You look like you're confused. I'll explain.

No. No, I won't. That's too confusing. Let me start with something easier. Dads! Yeah, let's start with dads. I like dads. Dads are necessary. In fact, I like my own dad. He's pretty cool. He helps me with stuff and doesn't try to butt into my business too much, but there are times when I just wish he'd ... well ... chill. Mellow out a little bit.

Which brings me to basketball. Are you confused? Good. That means you might be a boy. Dad works with me on my shots and rebounding. When he comes home from work he hollers, "Hey Sport! Let's shoot some hoops!" So we go out behind the garage and he shows me the way they used to play basketball back when he was a boy which isn't even close to the way we play now, but I play along with him. It's easy to hurt a dad's feelings.

So I play along with him and he teaches me how to play the zone defense even though everybody today plays man-to-man, and I humor him and say, "Hey! That's great, Dad! Thanks a

lot!” and he smiles like he’s just created the next NBA star and we go in and eat supper while he tells me stories about how he helped win the district championship back in the dark ages. Then they all took a victory lap on their horses.

Okay, I’m making that part up, but he’s not a boy anymore ... until the game starts. Dad never misses a game and that’s pretty cool since not every kid’s dad comes to every game, but if he’d just sit down and watch, then everything would be great. But he doesn’t. He shouts. Dad shouts a lot. If the game gets boring then people in the stands turn around and watch Dad. He’ll shout, “Get in your zone, Sport!” Dad, we don’t have zones anymore. Did I mention I’m going crazy?

And if he wasn’t bad enough then there’s the lady he married. Around home we just call her Mom. She’s one of the XX chromosomes. Mom has this mission ... she wants to turn me into the perfect child. She’s got these sayings memorized ... “Are you deaf or something?” “All I do is follow you around picking up after you!” “Call me when you get there so I’ll know you’re okay.” And “Did you flush?” Okay, some of things are necessary, but not in public! Mom! Not ... in ... public! You can raise me however you want, but not in public! Not around my friends. You’re standing there talking to some of your friends and your mom comes up and starts telling some old story about when I was little. This is not cool, Mom. You’re making your boy crazy. They’ll find me locked up in a loony bin some day and there’ll be this sign that says, “Driven crazy by his mother who was obsessed with his flushing!”

(to an audience member) See those bags under this eye? They’re caused by parents. And see the bags under this other one? That’s a sister bag. She’s older and that’s unfortunate. Older does not mean smarter, no matter what she says. She’s big into clothing. I mean her whole world is clothing. And this is no problem except that she thinks she knows how I should dress. The Declaration of Independence says that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator.” Not their sisters! “with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life,

liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” It says absolutely nothing about shoes. Nothing. I’ve looked. Thomas Jefferson wore heels so he had nothing smart to say on the matter. But my sister insists that your Nike’s have to be washed every night or you’ll like be banned from civilization. You’ll be forced to walk around the rest of your life with a sign hanging around your neck saying, “Beware. Dirty tennis shoes.” And the same goes for my jeans and shirts and everything else. She thinks I have to stand in front of her and pass inspection every time I go out in public.

Did I mention I am going crazy? Are you starting to get the hint? Everybody I know tells me, “You’ve got to learn to think for yourself!” but buddy, just try it once and see what happens. Your teacher tells you what to do, your coach tells you what to do, your parents and sister and friends and ... well, just try thinking for yourself and see what happens. They ... don’t ... like it.

Look, when I was seven years old I’d had enough so I ran away from home. I packed up my cell phone, an extra pair of underwear, three bags of Fritos and I set off to see the world. I still remember it. It was great. The world was mine ... for about two hours. I think I got as far as Wal-Mart when somebody saw me and called Mom. The world is full of spies ... did you know that? Secret agents that comb the world looking for boys trying to get their freedom. They spy on them, they report them, then they tell your mother and she comes and gets you and asks you if you flushed while you were on your journey.

I ... am ... going ... crazy.

One final topic, then I’ll go have myself locked up. Girls. Look, if this is going to embarrass any of you, then you can leave now. I wouldn’t blame you, but if I’m going to tell the whole story then I’ve got to tell you all of it. Girls. Women. Remember how in school they talked about the old days when parents would arrange marriages? How as soon as a kid was born they’d pick out a girl for him and he had no choice? Remember how bad that sounded? Well, let me tell you a little



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