



Breaking Out of Bedlam

Leslie Larson

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Cora Sledge is horrified when her children, who doubt her ability to take care of herself, plot to remove her from her home. So what if her house is a shambles? Who cares when she last changed her clothes? If an eighty-two-year-old widow wants to live on junk food, pills, and cigarettes, hasn't she earned the right? When her kids force her into The Palisades, an assisted living facility, Cora takes to her bed, planning to die as soon as possible. But life isn't finished with her yet, not by a long shot.

Deciding that truth is the best revenge, Cora begins to write a tell-all journal that reveals once and for all the secret she has guarded since she was a young woman. In entries that are profane, profound, and gossipy, she chronicles her childhood in rural Missouri, her shotgun wedding, and the terrible event that changed the course of her life. Intermingled with her reminiscences is an account of the day-to-day dramas at The Palisades—her budding romance with a suave new resident, feuds with her tablemates, her rollicking camaraderie with the man who oversees her health care, and the sinister cloud of suspicion that descends as a series of petty crimes sets everyone on edge. The story builds to a powerful climax as Cora's revelations about her past mesh with the unraveling intrigue in the present.

Cora is by turns outrageous, irreverent, and wickedly funny. Despite a life with more than its share of disappointment and struggle, she refuses to go gently into her twilight years, remaining intensely curious, disinclined to play it safe, and willing to start over. *Breaking Out of Bedlam* captures the loneliness and secrets that lurk within families, the hardscrabble reality facing women with limited resources, and the resilience of a woman who survives, despite all the odds, through an unlikely combination of passion, humor, and faith.

From the Hardcover edition.

Breaking Out of Bedlam Details

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From Reader Review Breaking Out of Bedlam for online ebook

Heather Ashby says

Breaking Out of Bedlam is my new favorite book! At first I was just captivated by the brilliant writer's voice of Cora - and, as a rebel, LOVED her rebellion in the nursing home. But then, her story developed. And - as all writers know - writing is therapy. Her life story unfolds once she starts to journal. And a good back story, it is. Hilarious, sad, poignant, laugh-out-loud funny, then tears falling sad. I loved it!!! I found myself reading slower, so I could make it last. THAT'S the mark of a fabulous book. What I don't get is all the reviews that praised this book, then only gave it 3 or 4 stars??? Write on, Leslie Larson!

Benni says

I first heard parts of the book from Ms. Larson's reading at San Diego Writer's Ink. It sounded irresistibly interesting, so I bought it. The book never suffers from slow pacing, and Cora Sledge, the protagonist, provides a unique and funny point of view. Loved it.

Chris says

Starting out this book I thought, OK this will be a lot of fun. The narrator/main character is an old feisty woman with clear and funny opinions about the people around her. But Cora became a fully-rounded character, which took the book to more meaningful depths than if she had just been a stereotype with a few funny observations. BOOB (I'm sure Cora would like this abbreviation for the book) seems at first to trod a familiar path, and yes, some of the way is familiar, but walking it in Cora's shoes makes it fresh, revealing and enjoyable.

Kathy says

I really enjoyed this book. It hit home for some very pertinent topics: family dynamics, aging, personal choice to name a few. Well worth a read.

Trish says

Just because you're old doesn't mean you have to wear pastels and look like an Easter egg, it doesn't mean that you need to be treated like a child, and doesn't mean you can't fall in love. Cora Sledge, at age 82, is moved from her home to an assisted living facility against her will by her children. While there she starts a journal documenting her life both past and present. There are a lot of humorous observations about being old, and the way people treat seniors, especially in the beginning of the book. We learn Cora's closely held secrets from her past, and watch her fall head over heels in love with one of the residents much to her children's dismay. While the story line is rather predictable, Cora is a fully developed character that you really get to know and cheer on every step of the way (even when she's wrong).

Pauline Evanosky says

“Breaking Out of Bedlam” by Leslie Larson. I couldn’t put this book down. Cora, not much older than I am, is in her elderly years. She’s had some major changes in her life which have impelled her into healing. She didn’t expect it to happen and it was not easy for her. This is the story of anybody’s life, male or female and how you might think your elderly self would be taking snoozes on the porch, or feet propped up on an ottoman while you watch football on the television. It turns out what happens in your later years can sometimes take more strength than you’ve ever needed in your life. These are things where, like anything, you have a choice to face or ignore. This is the opportunity to reflect on the things that hurt you terribly, the things you put away and were horrified to look at to find that now you might start healing. It is a time to settle accounts with yourself.

I loved Cora. She’s got a mouth on her. She’s a no-nonsense person; what folks call salt of the earth. She can be truly snarky too. I love how she interacts with her fellow assisted living compadres. I always feel there is something I can learn from the things I read and I think I learned a lot with this book. It certainly has dredged up my own pain. This time, with Cora’s example, I might be able to let that pain go.

Jeanne Boudreau says

An elderly widow, depressed, hypertensive, obese and hooked on pills is put into an assisted living residence by her children. Well, she had a story to tell and a plan to break out of that place and return to her home. There is such joy, sorrow, contrition and love in this story. You cheer for Cora, hope she can find a way to return to her home. You understand her children's concern for her health and wellbeing. It's a wonderfully believable story.

Jillwitucki says

What a wonderful read!!!!!!! I picked it up from the library yesterday and finished today--I haven't done that in many years. Funny, insightful, heartfelt, and very real. I can't wait to have my 80 year old Mom read it.

Penny says

Considering that my dad went to assisted living this year, it was kinda interesting reading this book and recognizing the similarities among assisted living facilities and their residents! The book starts out pretty humorous - I found myself laughing while reading quite a few passages. Then it takes a serious turn, while still keeping some humor.

Cora is writing her memories into a journal; things that she's never told anyone before. At the same time, her current life weaves through the telling. This book touches on some issues the elderly face; meanwhile, Cora's telling brings some healing to herself.

Clarabel says

J'ai probablement pris du temps pour le terminer, mais cela ne signifie pas que je n'ai pas aimé ! Voici le truculent portrait d'une mamie de 82 ans qu'on a collée en maison de retraite et qui ne décolère pas. Sa petite-fille lui a offert un cahier et un stylo pour tuer le temps, mais ce n'est pas trop le genre de Cora de s'épancher. Contre toute attente, elle s'adonne avec plaisir à cet exercice et elle nous raconte TOUT sur son quotidien aux Palisades. Avec son caractère bougon, Cora n'est pas commode et ne s'entend avec personne, elle traite les autres pensionnaires de pimbêches, elle fume en cachette, mange des bonbons en dépit de son régime, avale ses pilules plus que de raison. Heureusement, il y a Vitus, un européen aux manières raffinées, pour lequel elle s'entiche follement. Avec lui, elle se sent revivre. Cela lui donne une pêche d'enfer, elle devient presque raisonnable, elle maigrit, et elle se met à fouiller dans son passé pour comprendre ce qui a pu la rendre aigrie à ce point. Bon, la vie aux Palisades est également un peu chamboulée par une série de vols. Cora, notamment, a perdu son cristal fétiche - autant dire que celui qui a fait ça le paiera cher ! Malgré ses airs revêches, Cora Sledge est bougrement attachante, drôle et impitoyable. Parfois touchante, aussi, surtout quand elle repense à ses années en arrière et qu'elle met enfin le doigt là où ça fait mal.

Patty says

The book is hilarious throughout, but also tackles some very deep issues. The way this author writes made me feel that I actually was the character and could really feel her guilt, pain, frustration and especially love. You also instantly recognize the other characters because the author has a way of describing them to make them seem so real. I would think very hard about trying to push my mother into assisted living because even though it's wonderful for some people, I understand now the reasons why it doesn't work for all.

Becky says

Some of the chapters in this book were hilarious. I actually found myself laughing out loud. The events that take place are so true to real life. Kept me interested throughout the whole book.

Joan Winnek says

This amusing novel also shows the transformation that Cora Sledge brings about in herself, spurred by her anger at being removed from her home and put in an assisted living facility. She uses a journal, written in three books her granddaughter gives her to examine her life, both present and past, and to reveal a secret.

Darana Lobaugh says

My Feelings

My own Mother never liked the assisted living home and was very unhappy there. I've learned too late how

much an older person, now like myself, just wants to be in their own home with the things they've cherished for years. Do what you can to keep Mom or Dad at his home.

Ingrid Fasquelle says

Avec "Bons Baisers de Cora Sledge", Leslie Larson lève le voile sur un des sujets tabous de notre société. A l'heure où seules comptent la beauté et la jeunesse, elle offre une vision différente et audacieuse du troisième âge. Cora Sledge est un personnage rayonnant, aux antipodes du cliché du vieillard sénile ! On a affaire à une vieille dame combative, pleine de ressources, qui pense et s'exprime sans détour, avec modernité, dans un langage cru et plein d'humour ! Sous ses airs revêches, Cora Sledge n'en est pas moins un personnage attachant. Sa vivacité d'esprit, son sens aigu de l'observation en font une octogénaire épatante, qui en dépit de sa faible condition physique, bouleversera profondément les règles de vie des "Palisades". Les rebondissements sont nombreux et les situations au sein de ce microcosme agité souvent drôles, mais le tableau que brosse l'auteure n'est pas toujours aussi rose ! Le lecteur rougirait presque des descriptions de ces petits vieux séniles qu'il faut nourrir à la paille, à qui l'on impose un règlement souvent infantilisant... Au-delà de l'humour mordant, des rivalités entre femmes et des petites mesquineries qui font sourire, il y a cette "odeur de pisse et de détergent" qui vous prend à la gorge, la question ô combien actuelle de la dépendance, du placement des aînés et des conditions parfois dégradantes dans lesquelles ces derniers finissent leur vie...

Fort heureusement, le ton employé n'est jamais ni mièvre, ni larmoyant ! Même si certains pans du passé de Cora Sledge semblent davantage faits d'espoirs déçus, de tristesse et de malheur plutôt que de joie et de liberté, le roman de Leslie Larson reste avant tout un roman gai, tonique et plein d'espoir, un mélange de drôlerie et d'émotion très réussi ! Un roman facétieux, foisonnant d'énergie, qui apaisera les craintes de tous ceux qui ont peur de vieillir ! C'est réjouissant et bien sûr, hautement recommandable !
