

Discom What?

By John Roozen

Ethan was lost. His sister, Jessie, was lost. And his father was lost as well. Luckily, they were all lost together.

“Do you know which way to go?” Ethan asked his father.

“Uhh, that would be a no, his father answered. His father slowly looked around, eyes squinted and mouth grimaced, hoping to see some sign as to where they were or which way they should go. Ethan and Jessie had never seen him look quite like this. “I’m discombobulated,” his father said.

“Discom what?” Ethan asked.

“It means mixed up,” his father replied, “or at least I think that’s what it means. Anyway the word fits how I feel right now – dis-com-bob-u-lated. Only a big confusing word could describe what it feels like to be this lost.”

“We need a map,” their father said.

“We need a compass,” Ethan said.

“We need luck,” Jessie said, and they all agreed that she was right.

“Maybe we should climb up to a high spot,” Jessie suggested. “We can look out and hopefully see a landmark or the trees where we had lunch.” All three of them looked straight up in the air at the highest point towering above them. It was huge.

Just then, a loud gritty grumbling sound, RUMMMMM, came from behind them, getting louder and closer. Before they could turn around to see what it was, there came another sound, an awful screech. Ethan was the first to see it and let out a quick, “Oh No!”

Then BAMMM! The large truck skid into the smaller car in front of it, knocking it into the next car, and the next, and the next. BAM! BAM! SCREECH! BAM!

“Wow, that was discombobulated,” Ethan said. All three of them began to chuckle.

Here they were completely lost in the large foreign city of Tokyo, and a huge wreck occurs right in front of them. The tall buildings around them had given no clue as to which way to go. No one seemed to speak their language. Plus, the three of them could not speak Japanese and so could not understand the street signs.

They had left their phones with their mother at the picnic spot in the park. All they had done was walk to find a restroom in that wild new modern building, the one with the twisting

curving walls. Who knew that they would take the wrong stairway, go out the wrong door, go down the wrong street, and continue walking and talking without paying enough attention to where they were going until it was too late. They entered... Lostville.

Sirens were everywhere now, as the police cars hurried to the big wreck. Horns were honking as cars tried to get out of the way. People in the bashed cars were yelling and arguing.

“Why can’t we see that modern building?” Jessie asked.

“It’s not as tall as these other buildings,” her father said, “and it gets hidden. Let’s get away from this noisy mess.”

Just then, Ethan yelled out, “The horses! I know those horses!” Both his father and Jessie stood dumbfounded, not knowing what Ethan meant. “See it!” Ethan pointed. “I saw those horses and carriage in the park. I bet he’s going back to the park.”

“Let’s go!” his father yelled, and the three went running after the horses. Everyone thought they were running from the wreck, but the three were laughing as they ran. The horse carriage made a turn up ahead and they had to catch up fast. After four blocks, they could finally see the trees in the park, and knew they were back.

“Where were you for so long?” Ethan’s mother asked as they finally came up to the blanket by the trees.

“How shall I say it?” his father said, turning to look at the kids.

“Dis-com-bob-u-lated,” they all said together.

That is exactly when the vibration began. Ethan spun around expecting to see another car wreck. But it was not a noise – it was a movement in the ground.

“Earthquake!” his mother shouted. They all stood and looked at the people around them. No one seemed to know what to do next, and neither did Ethan’s family. Then the vibration stopped.

“That was cool,” Ethan said. He soon regretted saying that. The vibration returned and it was much stronger this time. Windows in the nearby buildings started to break, some even exploding, dropping the dangerous glass down to the sidewalks.

“Let’s stay here,” his mother said. “It is safer away from the buildings.”

People were shouting everywhere. Sirens were blaring. Horns began honking spontaneously on cars with security systems. Water began spurting up high into the air from broken water pipes in the street. Cars began hitting one another in a frantic effort to drive away, most wanting to get home to their families. Soon traffic was nothing but a mass of cars going nowhere.

People began pouring from the nearby buildings into the park where it was safer. The crowd of them stood watching the buildings start to sway from the movement of the ground.

The vibration suddenly stopped. Everyone in the park stood quietly for a while, waiting for the next vibration. “Earthquakes come in waves,” their mother whispered. “The ground keeps shifting until it gets stable.”

“They’re aftershocks,” Jessie added, “we learned about it in science class.”

Finally the crowd started to relax. Murmuring began as people wondered what to do next.

Then, “WHAMM!” The sound was deafening. Across the street at the big hotel, the roof of the drive-through entrance collapsed, crushing the cars underneath. Fortunately, all of the people were now safe in the park. Dust billowed up everywhere like a cloud.

Suddenly, a new noise. They all turned to look behind them. The horses had been spooked by the loud noise. They and the carriage were running loose with no driver, and coming directly at Ethan and his family. The carriage bounced and rocked wildly behind the horses, scaring them even more. Screams came from every direction in the crowd as people ran from the runaway horses.

Still, the horses continued to run straight at Ethan and his family, and they were coming fast. His father began waving his arms in the air to scare the horses into another direction. Ethan's mother hurried the kids behind a tree.

The horses did turn - but too sharply. The carriage could not make that sharp turn. It tipped over, breaking free from the horses, and began rolling and rolling right towards Ethan's father. He only had a second to try diving out of the way. It was not quite enough. The main part of the carriage missed him by inches, but he was struck by the harness.

As soon as the carriage stopped moving, the family rushed to his side. His head was bleeding badly and his arm was obviously broken. Still, he seemed okay. He stood up, a little shaky, but he could walk.

"The phones aren't working," Jessie said after giving hers a try. "We need an ambulance."

"It could take a long time for an ambulance to get here in this mess," her mother replied.

"I know!" Ethan shouted. "We passed a hospital when we were lost. It can't be more than four or five blocks away." They all stood looking at Ethan. He knew what they were thinking. Which way was it to the hospital?

Ethan got very still, imagining the way that they had come when running after the horse carriage. Left, right, right, one

block, two blocks. He tried to picture the entire route that they had taken. He was concentrating as hard as he could.

“Follow me,” Ethan said with surprising confidence. They walked slowly since his father was still wobbly. Ethan knew that it was important to keep his father from having to walk any further than was needed. He had to remember the way. They passed the two horses, who had calmed down after the carriage had broken free. They were now calmly grazing like nothing had occurred. Four blocks later, there was the hospital entrance.

“Nice job, Ethan,” said the family.

Ethan replied, “Thanks! So, what’s the opposite of discombobulated?”

The End

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