

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 12: Crazy Man Meets the Dog, Sidestepper, swat with meaningful empathy

Just when Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, thought their travels couldn't spin into anything weirder than a bunch of nothing shapes haunting the deep dark scary woods...here they were... thrashing around on a street overlooking a lost baby soother...up to their ears in road detritus.

Faces pressed to the road, they stared at the soother, the road behind and to the sides of the soother, sky above and the street below.

Crazy Man mumbled through the road muck: "I think we're off the path of adventure and new meanings."

"Where are we?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

"It's called a street," said Crazy Man, possibly in an unintentional condescending way, like a man talking to a dog.

The dog, Sidestepper, glared at Crazy Man with hot ire bubbling across the surface of his corneas. Crazy Man noticed this and performed immediate calculations in his head to figure out what he'd said to provoke the dog's corneas. He had difficulty with a few quadratic equations and decided to change the subject. "That's a soother," he said. "For babies."

This made sense to both of them at some unruly level, so they lay in the road and stared deeply into the nature of the lost baby soother. Unfortunately they both drew blanks. Possibly, they'd forgotten their own soothers, those milk-less nipple replacements that they carried around in their mouths all day. Maybe they'd even lost a few favourite soothers, ones that trusted them to hang on and not lose them. Maybe they'd even thrown one or two out the window on purpose...in a tantrum. Maybe this lost soother shared a spiritual bond with those other soothers. And maybe not.

Of course, the dog, Sidestepper, in his one-minded search for maternal confirmation couldn't help saying, "Are you my mother?"

"No," said a frail voice that seemed to waver around the soother.

Well, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, had recently, or a long time ago, gone eye-to-eye with the holes between reality, psychotic bridge nails, non-vegan deer and that which they were supposed to fear most, but didn't really. A talking baby soother at this point seemed perfectly normal.

"Just asking," said the dog, Sidestepper. "Are you lost?"

"Mmmm," said the soother. "My baby threw me out the window."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other in horror. They bounded to their feet, possibly a little too high and too energetically, leading them to a mid-air crash directly over the lost soother but they landed safely on their butts on either side of it, Crazy Man crossed-legged and the dog, Sidestepper, a mess of overly long canine leggery that might have been mistaken for a confused Buddha looking for meaning in the streets. But they felt a rush of relaxation, sitting there on the side of the road with a lost soother, their hearts swelling with soother empathy. "There you go, little guy," said Crazy Man. "We're so sorry your baby threw you out the window. Is there anything we can do? I might have a kitchen."

"I'm so disappointed," said the soother.

"Aw..." said Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, in unison.

"So disappointed," said the soother in a kind of latex weepiness.

"We'd be disappointed too, if our babies threw us out the window," said Crazy Man.

"You don't understand," said the soother.

"Tell us," said the dog, Sidestepper. "We have large hearts and even larger ears."

"It's...it's the way it was supposed to happen," said the soother. "The way I *knew* it would happen."

Just then, a truck drove by kicking up flecks of mud and dried dirt that missed them by about three and a half inches. They were so enthralled by the soother's disappointment they didn't even see the truck.

The soother continued: "I always knew, right from the minute that baby wrapped her mean little lips around me that she was going to throw me out the window and into a gutter where I'd be washed out to sea and become floating pollution."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other and back at the soother. "Well, that baby's a bastard," said the dog, Sidestepper. "But you can be happy that she missed the gutter by at least three feet."

"But that's the whole point!" said the soother. "I prepared myself to be disappointed at being thrown into a gutter. I made it my life's mission. I took note of gutters wherever I went. I listened in on her parents talking about gutters. I made my peace with gutters and looked forward to my disappointment when my baby threw me into the gutter." The soother sniffled a few times and sighed. "But here I am...three feet away from the gutter, robbed of my disappointment."

The dog, Sidestepper, in a sudden revelation of empathic realism, yelled: "You're a victim of the disappointment of not being disappointed!"

The soother wailed, "Finally, someone who understands!"

Whereupon, Crazy Man's head exploded. In a fit of solution-based empathic realism, he swatted the soother so hard it flew across the side of the street and into the gaping grill of a gutter where it sailed into the darkness with a long frail, "Weeeeeeeeeeeeeee."

"That was weird," said the dog, Sidestepper.

The two stood up as a blue Soul drove by with a young boy staring out the window at a strange dog-like creature on impossibly long legs and a strange man dressed in capes and clown clothing. No one would ever believe what he saw. He would be laughed at by friends and family. He would never eat another hot dog. He would be destined to have nightmares for the rest of his life.

"We need to get back on the path," said the dog, Sidestepper.

"And we need to find food," said Crazy Man.

"And my mother," said the dog, Sidestepper.

And off they went to return to the path of adventure and new meanings and all its freshly roasted concepts.

To be continued...

© Biff Mitchell
www.biffmitchell.com

(Thanks to my bestie, Steph, for the line "the disappointment of not being disappointed." It made Crazy Man's head explode.)