

## The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 7: Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, meet the one-legged ducks of the faraway lake that's not really a lake

A river flowed alongside the path of adventure and new meanings for a long way. It was a wide, deep, dark and slow river, the kind of river you might imagine steamboats plying their way through the water on hot summer days with music and laughter roiling in its wake. You might imagine yourself on a home made raft with your friends in the middle of the river on a sweltering summer day wondering how you and your friends are going to get back to the shore since the poles no longer touch the bottom of the river. Tourists mistook it for a lake, it was that wide and stretched that far. But it was just a river, a wide lake-like river, and Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, being tourists in this outdoor thing suddenly had lake thoughts.

“Do you think there might be fish in that lake that we can eat?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man's eyes blistered with desperate expectations as he scanned the lake from side to side, forward and backward, up and down, looking for fish gushing up from the depths to swallow bugs. There were no gushes, not even a ripple. The surface of the water was still like a pond on a hot summer day, only bigger. And apparently...no low flying bugs. “No,” said Crazy Man, eyes blistered with broken promises. “This lake is no restaurant.”

The dog, Sidestepper nodded sadly, almost in tears, hungry. He felt cheated by the lake. He wondered why there were no fishes jumping through that portal between water and air to grab

food from another world. “Stupid lake,” he said just as his eyes caught on something like hooks jumping at his eyes and tearing his attention apart. He almost fell over on his overly long legs that made him feel like one of those thatch huts you see in movies in the far far East. He felt like he was always waiting for high water. But he stayed erect and observant as he turned to face Crazy Man, catch his attention, and say, “Look.” He shrugged his head to the left and pointed to a spot along the shore with his canine nose, which was a little black ball about the size of a marble at the end of his short snout.

Crazy Man followed the marble-size nose and saw two one-legged ducks having a conversation on the lake shore. They were too far away to make out what the ducks were saying so they made their way down to the shore, the ducks still conversing, but eyeing their every step until they stood a few feet apart, half-ogling each other. The dog, Sidestepper, broke the silence of eye-balling when he said, “Are you my mother?”

The one-legged ducks stared at each other for a moment and one of them whispered to the other, who turned toward the dog, Sidestepper, gazed deep into his soul with his duck eyes and said, “No we’re not. And you’re a bastard.”

Without a glimmer of emotion, empathy or a sense of responsibility the ducks watched as first the dog, Sidestepper, and then the odd looking man in the orange cape began shedding tears enough to create puddles. This went on for about eight minutes and fifteen seconds before Crazy Man snapped out of it and snapped his fingers as though just remembering something.

“You’re ducks,” he shouted. “Ducks. I heard that you’re greasy but still good eating. Can we eat you?”

The ducks looked at Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, and then at each other. They continued doing this for a while (but not quite eight minutes and fifteen seconds) before one of them said, “No, you cannot eat us. You can only eat us if you shoot us out of the sky with shotguns and you can only do it during a certain time of the year.”

“But we’re hungry,” said Crazy Man. “And we don’t have shotguns and we forgot what certain time of the year it is. Can we eat you just a little bit?”

The two ducks laughed and pointed at Crazy Man with their wings. They laughed and pointed for several minutes. They whispered to each other as they stared at Crazy Man and he began to feel that maybe, just maybe, they were making fun of him. He’d never met mean ducks before; in fact, he’d never actually met a duck before but he’d seen lots of pictures and he’d watched nature shows on TV that showed how ducks lived and a thought occurred to him: *Do I have a television?*

It was the dog, Sidestepper, who finally concluded that the ducks were making fun of his travel mate and he started barking at them. Well, the body perched at the top of the long stilt-like legs wasn’t all that big because most of its growing power had gone into its legs. There wasn’t much left for things like a long tail, a significant body, long ears...things like that. So, tall as he was, the dog, Sidestepper, was physically diminutive if you removed his legs from the equation. There just wasn’t enough mass at the top of those legs to create a convincing bark. He sounded more like someone sitting on bubble wrap. He popped barks at the ducks.

The ducks were amazed.

They bounced up and down on their single legs and said, “Do it again! Do it again!”

The dog, Sidestepper, suddenly felt flattered, a feeling he rarely had, given that most people avoided him and laughed at his long legs and tiny body. So he forgot about his conclusion that the ducks were making fun of Crazy Man and spewed forth a barrage of pukey little barks. The ducks bounced up and down furiously. “Do it again! Do it again!” The dog, Sidestepper, had never witnessed such ebullient behaviour and it made him bark louder. Crazy Man stopped wondering if he had a television and started laughing and jumping up and down like the ducks, but on two legs. The ducks saw this and thought that he was pretty weird so they flapped their wings, skimmed across the water and flew into the sky. Seconds later, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, heard shots fired from the other side of the lake and the two ducks exploded in the sky in a plume of plumage and blood and plunged into the lake.

“They would have been too greasy anyway,” said Crazy Man.

“Did you notice when they took off,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “they had two legs, as though they had an extra one tucked away

“Fake one-legged ducks,” said Crazy Man as he nodded knowingly. “I’m glad we didn’t eat them now. They probably would have given us indigestion. All that grease.” He suddenly snapped his head toward the dog, Sidestepper. “Do you think I have a television set?”

The dog, Sidestepper, thought about this for a moment and said, “No. Probably not.”

And on that note, Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, continued down the path of adventure and new meanings, stomachs growling and minds twitching with anticipation.

“You don’t think we’ll starve to death, do you?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Nope,” said Crazy Man. “We’ll feast on adventure and devour new meanings. I think I might be getting the hang of this outside thing.”

The dog, Sidestepper, wondered what the hell he meant by that and fantasized a feast of Peking Duck.

(NOTE: Ducks stand on one leg and keep the other tucked in to keep warm by changing legs when the other becomes too cold.)

To be continued...