

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 16: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, are stumped in the deep dark scary woods

Their eyes widened as...

...a beam of moonlight cut through the darkness of the deep dark scary woods and highlighted a broken tree, its stump carcass withering slowly under a daily onslaught of bugs and fungus, its trunk and branches, leaves and twigs sprawled across the undergrowth in forest death.

“I’m a broken tree,” wailed the stump.

“Broken,” cried the trunk and leaves.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper (eyes still wide) immediately fell to their knees...an uncanny feat for a canine with uncanny legs...and gawked.

“Stop your gawking,” cried the stump. “It makes me self-conscious.”

“We were just...” Crazy Man tried to say.

“You were gawking,” said the stump. “It’s impolite to gawk at those who’ve been brutalized by wind, fire, floods, lightning...and the inexorable march of time.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper rose to their feet in their respectively strange ways (which we won’t get into for mental health reasons) and looked around everywhere except at the broken tree. They made whistling sounds and did a kind of standing lope thing that that would break the

hearts of all but the most seriously disturbed. Apparently, the stump was most seriously disturbed.

“You’re just doing that because you’re afraid of being called politically incorrect. You don’t really mean it. My plight is nothing to you. Nothing.” And the stump wailed into the darkness.

“Ours too,” cried the trunk and leaves. “Nothing to you.”

“I’m broken but I’m here,” said the stump. “This is where I was. This is where I grew and sprouted limbs and branches and leaves and sap. Oh...the sap...I sapped with the best of them. I sapped bugs into sap tsunamis. I dripped sap onto ants and spiders. I was the sapper of sappers. And now I’m just a stump in the woods, rotting away beside once beautiful bows.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, pounded their feet into the path in mutual supportive empathy for the stump and its lost trunk.

“I was hoping that one day I might become petrified wood,” moaned the stump. “I would have been eternal in all my bits and pieces. I would have been in collections and souvenir shops. Now, I’m just going to deteriorate into forest gas.”

“So,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “you’re not my mother?”

“Nobody’s your mother,” said the stump. “And you’re a bastard. And where’s your unreasonable empathy for me.”

“How did this happen?” said Crazy Man, who’d stopped pounding his feet into the path so that he could hear his question.

“What do you mean...how did this happen?” said the stump. “It happened. Isn’t that enough?”

“Were you struck my lightning?”

“No.”

“Hurricane?”

“Not really.”

“So...what happened?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

It might have been a trick of the darkness or maybe a fleeting misplacement of brain cells in man and dog, but the stumped seemed to slump in resignation. “Oh...alright then,” said the stump. “One day, I just sort of fell apart.”

“You fell apart?” said Crazy Man. “Just fell apart?”

“I was trying to speed things up.”

“Speed what things up?”

“Turning into petrified wood!” screamed the stump.

A cacophony of withered sorrow clamoured into the air around the dying leaves and decaying trunk. Twigs twitched in death throes. The air soured with the stink of a broken promise. The self-pitying racket lifted into the air like metal a concert gone wrong and crashed onto the forest floor with a dissonance that disturbed the hell out of the night bugs, even the one taking a bite out of the trunk, thinking, *You try eating petrified wood.*

“It didn’t work,” said the stump. “We should have waited.”

“Waited for what?” said Crazy Man.

“Petrification,” said the stump.

At this point, Crazy Man and dog, Sidestepper, looked at each other with that knowing look... the one that says, “This stump is not playing with a full deck.” And, upon this realization, they stuck their tongues out at the the stump and ran down the path laughing and making silly faces.

The stump screamed, “You could try putting me back together, you know, give me a second chance.”

“Naw!” shouted the path buds.

“There’s bugs in that plan,” yelled the dog, Sidestepper, and the two laughed into the darkness for about ten seconds before they realized that the moon and stars were blanked out by clouds and it wasn’t quite clear where the path bordered on the deep dark scary woods. This provided food for thought and conversation.

“I’m beginning to think that food’s an illusion,” said Crazy Man.

“I’m beginning to think that mother’s are an illusion,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

They looked at each...well, in the direction of each other, feeling the warmth of friendship in the murk. “Naw,” said Crazy Man, “there’s food out here...out here in this outside thing.”

“And a mother, too,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“Yes, and a mother, too.”

And they walked confidently down the path of adventure and new meanings, guided by the light of their purpose. Or something like that

To be continued...