

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 29: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper, learn how to take a picture

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After what seemed like a vortex of conjoined lifetimes on the path of adventure and new meanings, the dog, Sidestepper, was nowhere close to finding his mother and he was beginning to resign himself to a lifetime of ridiculously long legs and having (for some unknown reason) to walk sideways. Crazy Man was nowhere close to making sense of this outside thing and he was beginning to wonder if it made any sense at all. Food had become a mystical apparition haunting their dreams. Taste had become an uncertain memory. Crazy Man missed the kitchen he might have had in another life and possibly in another dimension. Confusion rained on the path. Hopelessness rained on the path. Questions without answers poured down on the path until...the path was under water.

“Where did the path go?” said Crazy Man. He stared into a scene that didn’t make sense. There was too much water.

“I think it’s under the water,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“But we don’t have a canoe filled with cold frothy beer to continue our journey,” said Crazy Man. “This doesn’t make any sense.”

“Yes it does,” said a bench with its bottom half under water.

“But no one can get to you for a relaxing sit-down without a raft,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “Or they could walk and get wet feet. Wet feet are not relaxing; therefore, this doesn’t make any sense.”

“You’re just not seeing the sense,” said a towering elm tree. Its upper branches spread out to form an umbrella over its reflection in the water. “The bench is irrelevant. It’s the entire scene that makes sense.”

“Hey!” said the bench.

“Pardon me,” said the tree. “See how the trees, benches and road grab your eyes and drag them into the fog? That’s called leading lines. The bench is actually the first thing to catch your eyes and then...zoom...off you go...into the fog.”

“That’s me,” said the bench. “Always the center of attention.” If benches could smile, this bench would be one big happy face.

“And to make sure you see the bench,” said the tree, “I’ve created a frame around it with my umbrella branches and dark trunk stretching over the water and reflected in the water. In fact, myself and the tree to my left...your right...form another frame and we create a rough rule of thirds thing.”

“That’s really really great,” said Crazy Man, “but our path is under water.”

“Hey!” said a street sign that seemed out of place in the scene. “A little respect for the tree. It’s been around longer than both of you. You would be wise to listen.”

“But,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “if the bench is the subject, why do you create lines to lead our eyes away from it?”

“It’s called filling the frame,” said a tree off in the distance, perhaps lost in the fog. “This is one very filled frame.”

“But shouldn’t it be filled with the bench?” said Crazy Man.

“You’re just not listening,” said the road sign. “Notice the vertical symmetry formed by the trees. It gives solidity and depth of field to the scene.”

“But it takes our attention away from the bench,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“But I bring it back,” said a horizontal concrete sidewalk in front of the road sign. “After your eyes are dragged to the fog, I point them back to the bench.”

“And that’s after I drag your eyes away from the fog with my dark square,” said the road sign. “And my stand points down to the sidewalk and onto the bench.”

“And don’t forget me,” said the fog. “I give the scene mood and atmosphere.”

“And I give it a sense of juxtaposition,” said the water, “so out of place with the benches and trees. It gives the scene a sense of wonder and the potential for story.”

“Go ahead,” said the bench. “We put the scene together for you. Now you can take a picture.”

“Yes!” said the other benches, the trees, the road, the water, the fog and even the reflections in the water, giving the scene a deeper depth of field. “We’re the picture you’ve been looking for and we’re already composed for you. You don’t have to think...just point and click.”

“Hey!” said a blade of grass lost somewhere in the distant fog. “Don’t listen to them...I’m the subject!”

As Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, watched, the fog in the distance converged on the blade of grass, spun it until its roots ripped out of the ground, and then tossed it into the water where it drowned.

“What was the about?” said Crazy Man.

“Someone took a macro shot of that blade of grass last week,” said the road sign, “and it’s been intolerable ever since. Just trust us...the bench is the subject, so get your cameras out.”

“Camera time, everyone!” yelled the second bench to the right. “Everybody hold it!”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared into the scene.

The scene waited.

The two travelers stared.

“Come on,” said a reflection in the water. “We can’t hold this pose forever. Get your camera out.”

“But we don’t have a camera,” said the dog, Sidestepper.

The scene went quiet, as though the very air held its breath. This went on for about two seconds...a fleeting eternity in a world where every element cooperates to create a scene worth its digital space on a camera’s card. A sense of brooding suffused the air.

“Check your pockets!” yelled the bench.

“I don’t have pockets,” said the dog, Sidestepper. Beside him, Crazy Man was dressed in his skintight ninja outfit. Swords, nunchucks and throwing stars formed patterns under the black material but none of them looked remotely like a camera.

“You bastards!” yelled the bench.

Its words echoed in the air as the scene let out its breath, sighed, and bent with a cool breeze that drifted in from nowhere. The fog lifted and the water receded, revealing the path of adventure and new meanings now covered with interesting formations of driftwood. Puffy little blobs of cloud floated serenely in the sunny sky.

“Always interesting when the path detours away from the deep dark scary woods,” said Crazy Man.

The dog, Sidestepper, lifted one of his long skinny rear legs and scratched behind his ear in a truly obscene bending motion. Halfway into the seventy-fifth scratch, something fell out of the fur around his ear and plunked onto the ground. It was his secret mini spy camera. He looked at the camera and then at Crazy Man, who looked at the camera and then at the dog, Sidestepper.

“Oops...” they said in unison, and chuckled.

As they continued down the path of adventure and new meanings, they were sure they heard faint grumblings from the benches and trees and they were eager to get back into the woods which, though deep dark and scary, seemed less weird than the rest of the world.

To be continued...

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