

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 40: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper,

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These are the days of separation...from our circles and ourselves. These are the times of giving up our illusions as we face the payback for our denials. This is the age of...

“You must have heard that!” said the dog, Sidestepper. “That voice...”

Crazy Man cocked his head to the side and wiggled his ears into a configuration designed to pick up the slightest nuance in sound, though it rarely, if ever, worked. But it looked cool...when he wasn't wearing his terrifying clown ears.

"It's coming from the deep dark scary woods," said the dog, Sidestepper. "At least I think it is. "Can you hear it?"

Crazy Man squinted his eyes as though that would make him see the sound better, but squinting wasn't as cool as wiggling so he cut the squinting short and said, "Nope."

Once again, the path of adventure and new meanings opened up beside a river, a wide majestic river where there was no place for mysterious narrative voices to hide unless they could swim or climb a tree. But these skills have never been attributed to mysterious narrative voices so the air was still and voiceless. The dog, Sidestepper, relaxed. Crazy Man, sensing his companion's euphoria, stopped wiggling his ears and said, "Have you ever tried talking back to the voice?"

The dog, Sidestepper, had considered this in previous voice visitations but was concerned that, since no one else seemed to hear the voices, he might appear to be talking to himself, and he wasn't that breed of dog that would do such a thing. Chase his tail, yes...talk go himself, no. It was a matter of canine perspective. There was only one answer that made sense to him: "I wouldn't know where to look so that I could face the words."

This made no sense to either of them, so they changed the topic.

"That's a weird looking weeping willow," said Crazy Man.

The dog, Sidestepper, followed Crazy Man's line of sight to one of the biggest willows he'd ever seen. Its branches soared into the sky and then dropped as though defeated by gravity. It appeared lonely and lopsided. Something essential was missing.

"It looks like half of it is missing," said the dog, Sidestepper. "And it looks sad."

Crazy Man noticed a large stump at the base of the tree, as though a second tree had once sprung up from the same roots.

"Half of me *is* missing," said the tree. "And yes, I am sad."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, remained calm. They'd talked to trees before. And trees had talked back to them. Not all trees were of the deep dark scary woods variety. On the other hand, they feared the opening of another sad story that would put them to sleep, so they approached the tree with caution.

"Where did your other half go?" said Crazy Man.

"Torn from our common roots by a hurricane," said the tree, and its boughs lurched into a deeper droop. The air around the tree crackled with a sense of loss. The grass at the base of the tree was brown and lifeless. Even the dirt was devoid of happy ants scurrying around doing their ant things. Not a single bird, not even a wayward finch, was to be seen perched on branches or boughs. "There were two of us for over a hundred years, since the day we were struck by lightning that split us into arboreal companions. We thrived through the seasons, the floods, the snow, the insects, the droughts, the tattoos left by lovers with knives. We were two, but one. We comforted each other during those long dismal days of March when we encouraged each other to come back to life after months of cold and darkness."

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were sound asleep and snoring. Though sad and broken, the tree was patient and waited for the pair to wake up. It might have been four minutes with four

seasons or four months of one season...or another number...before Crazy Man had a nightmare about clowns and his screaming woke them both.

“Welcome back,” said the tree. “My apologies for boring you with my heart-felt feelings.”

“That’s OK,” said the dog, Sidestepper, “we needed the sleep.”

The tree’s foliage rippled with empathetic appreciation of the pair’s need to sleep and was about to repeat its story when Crazy Man said, “You wouldn’t happen to have seen a female dog with eyes like my buddy’s walking by here a few lifetimes ago?”

“No,” said the tree, “and you’re both bastards.”

Having gotten that out of the way, the dog, Sidestepper, said, “How come only half of you was blown away and not all of you?”

“Chance,” said the tree. “Thousands of trees fell that day. Some were old and ready to fall, some were young and convinced of their immortality. But they fell as others, both weak and strong, withstood the howling wind and rain and survived with barely a missing branch.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, wondered where the tree was going with this, but they were still awake. “Have you tried meditation?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“No,” said the tree. “I weep. I weep for the trees we lost and I weep for the tree I lost. I weep for the trees.”

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were so touched by the tree’s weeping that they followed suit and wept for hours. Tears formed puddles of sad water that flowed through the grass and soaked into the ground where it bathed the tree’s roots in warm wet comfort. The tree suddenly felt that it was no longer alone.

However, it so happened that a bolt of lightning that had strayed from its storm saw the lonely willow tree and struck it with such force that it immediately turned into a raging fire that burned itself out within seconds leaving nothing but a pile of ash the wind quickly dispersed over the grass and water.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, stared with jaws dangling and eye whites circling their irises (Try not to think about this. I wouldn’t.)

“Do you think it’s happier now?” said the dog, Sidestepper.

“At least it’s not sad now,” said Crazy Man.

“Chance,” said the dog, Sidestepper. “Seems it always catches up.”

Crazy Man nodded agreement even though he had no idea what the dog, Sidestepper, was talking about.

To be continued...

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