

The Existential Adventures of Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper



Episode 41: Crazy Man and the Dog, Sidestepper,

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A vast clearing on one side of the path of adventure and new meanings spread into the horizon in front of Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper. It was dominated by a single barren tree, but this was no ordinary single barren tree...this tree's top branches were home to an endless murder of crows coming and going.

"Why do they call a bunch of crows a murder of crows?" said the dog, Sidestepper.

Crazy Man thought about this until his eyeballs rolled in steam. "Maybe because they only murder things when there's more than one of them."

The dog, Sidestepper, thought this was as reasonable an explanation as any even though it didn't really make any sense, but then, making sense was never as much fun as making things up in a world where fiction is louder than fact.

"Hey, you guys!" yelled a crow. "Are you the ones who saved the world from aliens who want to confiscate all our tin foil?"

"I think all they want from us is to leave the rest of the universe alone," said the dog, Sidestepper. "We were wondering why you're called a murder of crows."

The crows snickered. "We got a bad rep on that one," said another crow. "A bunch of dumb humans..." The crow looked Crazy Man up and down. "...present company excluded, I hope...pegged us as portents of disaster."

"They said we killed other birds," said another crow.

"But we did," said still another crow.

“OK,” said the previous crow. “We ate a few birds. We were hungry. There were no fast food restaurants back then. People didn’t throw shit away like they do these days. It wasn’t until later that the dumpsters and highways became our pantries.”

“We’re really actually pretty smart,” said a previously silent crow. “We use tools, play jokes and master new skills faster than a mole in astro turf. By-the-way, moles taste great with a little dandelion pollen on them.”

The other crows regarded the previously silent crow with avian disdain. One of them shouted, “Don’t give away our secret recipes!”

“So what kind of tools do you use?” said Crazy Man.

“Well,” said the first crow to speak. He was black with a long scary beak. “I’m pretty sure I could do wonders on a lathe if I had one. But I can pick the eyes out of a mole in just two seconds with a toothpick.”

This brought another wave of disapproval from the rest of the crows, including the one who gave up the family mole recipe. “We’re not like that,” said a smaller crow that had just landed in time to hear the conversation. “We would never use toothpicks to pick the eyes out of a mole. We’re way beyond that. We use forks for that. Tools.”

The other crows initially nodded agreement but then un-nodded. “But we really wouldn’t poke the eyes out of a mole with a fork,” said a crow with a deep voice. “Or a toothpick. We have devastating beaks.”

“Yeah,” said the second crow to speak, “we can poke eyes out of moles au naturelle.”

Just then, a crow circling in the sky dropped what appeared to be a small furry animal from its talons right down on the head of the first crow to speak. The crow was delighted to have its lunch fall out of the sky and onto its head. It let the lunch slide down to its beak, but realized that it was just a big old fur ball. The crow in the sky yelled, “Ha ha! Got you!” and flew away. As the crow robbed of its dream of a home delivery meal muttered obscenities, the others laughed.

“See,” said one of them. “We have an excellent sense of humor.”

The crow with fur on its beak glared at its fellow crow but remained silent as it fantasized both the joker and the heckler being torn to shreds by rabid clowns. Thankfully, Crazy Man couldn’t read the crow’s thoughts.

“So when you’re not *not* digging the eyes out of moles with beaks, forks or toothpicks, what do you do?” said Crazy Man.

This caused confusion among the crows. You could almost feel it in your teeth. The crows were suddenly quiet, glancing at each other, dipping their heads as though trying to figure something out and thinking maybe it’s somewhere on the ground or hiding behind a bough in their tree. This went on for as long as the crow flies before the crow that dropped the fur ball swooped out of the sky and made a fluttery landing on the tree’s highest bough.

Where its left eye had been there was a deep hole that glowed red beside an eye as black as a burned pilaf. It targeted Crazy Man with the pilaf eye and said, “Why do you want to know that? What business is that of yours? Why should we tell a perfect stranger what we do?” It thought for a moment and thrust its weird-eyed head forward in a threatening manner that was totally lost on Crazy Man. In its best menacing crow voice, it said, “I may have a fork.”

Crazy Man smiled and, with an air of victory and a one-better-than-thou tone, he said, “And I might have a kitchen. And a pizza pan.”

The cocky crow shrunk ten sizes smaller in sheer bewilderment. There was no way it had a kitchen and it wasn’t even sure what a pizza pan was...but it desperately wanted one and this guy had one. “Where is your pizza pan?”

“In the kitchen I might have,” said Crazy Man victoriously.

This was more than the crow could bear. It flapped its wings and clacked its beak and the socket that had discontinued its eye-ness glowed deep red. Crazy Man prepared for the worst by dropping to his knees and screaming, “Don’t hurt me! I might have a kitchen.”

In a moment of un-bird-like behavior, the crow spewed a long stringy stream of crow guano that fell through the air like a horrifying ribbon (the kind a clown would use) and draped itself over the heads of the crows below.

Pandemonium ensued.

It was difficult to figure out exactly what happened. The tree was suddenly an epicenter of noise and movement, as though the tree itself felt the rage of having been shit on by a one-eyed crow...which was suddenly nowhere to be seen.

It might have been moments, it might have been days or weeks, but eventually calm ascended from the tree's roots, up through the trunk and into the branches where it seeped into crow talons and calmed the attached crows. After a while, one of the crows yelled, "Let's go shit on a parking lot!" Whereupon, the entire murder of crows took to the air to shit on a parking lot.

They were immediately replaced by a second murder of crows that had been circling overhead waiting for the first murder to vacate.

"Hey, you guys!" yelled the first crow of the second murder. "Are you the ones who saved the world from aliens who want to confiscate all our tin foil?"

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, were suddenly inundated with a powerful sense of déjà vu, and we all know where déjà vu leads...

"That's right," said the dog, Sidestepper. "There were thousands of them. They clucked like chickens and growled like moles on amphetamines."

"Moles?" said one of the new crows. "What do you know about moles?"

Crazy Man choked back a laugh and said, "Nothing. Well, except maybe a recipe I once heard about. You know, moles and dandelion pollen."

As one, the crows went silent and glared at Crazy Man. In fact, the only movement in the tree was their war of thoughts:

We should kill them.

Kill! Kill! Kill!

We should eat them.

Eat! Eat! Eat!

No...the dog's kind of cute...in a terrifying way.

We should poke their eyes out with our mighty beaks.

Poke! Poke! Poke!

NO! Roast them on a rock in the sun and eat their toes.

Screw you and your toes, pervert, eat their genitalia!

Whereupon, the crows stopped their war of thought and stared disapprovingly at the last crow to speak and then, as one, turned their back on that crow...who immediately died, fell out of the tree, turned to chaff on the ground and dispersed with the wind.

At this point, Crazy Man decided that messing with crows' minds was likely not a good thing. But hell, the dog, Sidestepper, wasn't going to be cowed by a little crow magic. "So...yes!"

The crows turned towards him with passive interest glowing in their black eyes as memories of mole recipes dissipated with the wind.

"The aliens wanted to steal the Earth's tin foil and use it to barbecue alien crows."

The crows thought about this for a few ages and, one by one, burst out in crow laughter. Crows circling in the sky swooped down to land on the tree, as did crows foraging in the woods for moles. Within the time it takes to plan the shortest path to the best joke the tree transformed into a solid mass of crow. Laughing crow.

The first crow to speak to the two travelers calmed down enough to speak. "Caw."

This was no ordinary caw. It was a caw to leave. A caw to not mess with large black birds with deadly beaks, deadly talons and deadly recipes.

Crazy Man and the dog, Sidestepper, answered the caw by quietly, slowly and carefully shuffling back onto the path and out of sight of the crows.

After they'd walked for while in silence, Crazy Man turned to the dog, Sidestepper, who was already facing him (stepping sideways and all) and said, "I think I cawed eat a mole right now."

The dog, Sidestepper, giggled and said, "I cawed not stand to see you do that."

And the two continued down the path of adventure and new meanings laughing uproariously as they made up as many crow jokes as the cawed.

They didn't notice the much over-sized crow in the sky, circling over them, one eye fiery red.

To be continued...

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